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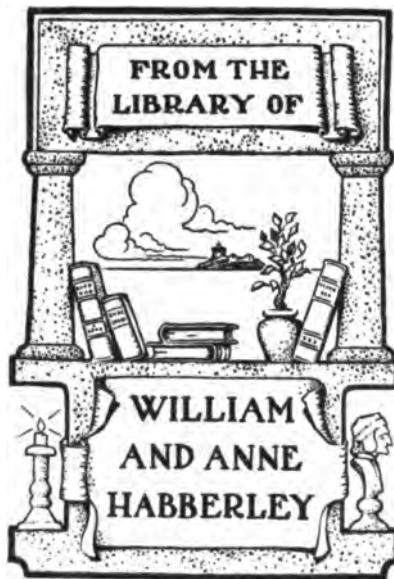
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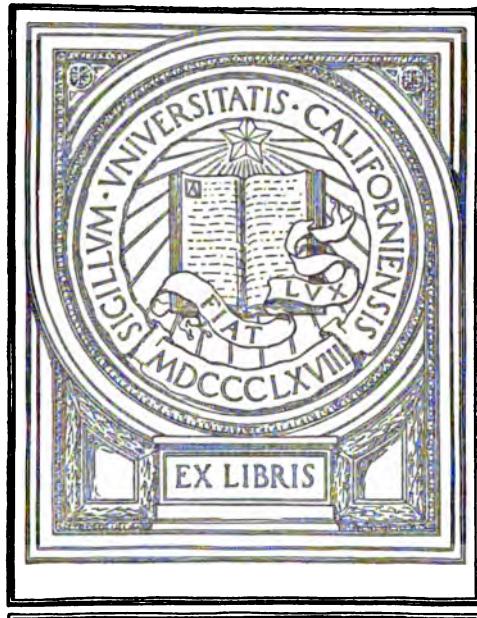
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IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM C. HABBERLEY



TH

KNEBWORTH LIMITED EDITION

HAROLD
THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

FALKLAND
CALDERON, THE COURTIER

BY

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

(*LORD LYTTON*)



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON
ESTES AND LAURIAT

1892

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HAROLD
THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS

HAROLD,

THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS.

BOOK X.

THE SACRIFICE ON THE ALTAR.

CHAPTER I.

THE good Bishop Alred, now raised to the See of York, had been summoned from his cathedral-seat by Edward, who had indeed undergone a severe illness during the absence of Harold; and that illness had been both preceded and followed by mystical presentiments of the evil days that were to fall on England after his death. He had therefore sent for the best and the holiest prelate in his realm, to advise and counsel with.

The bishop had returned to his lodging in London (which was in a Benedictine abbey, not far from the Aldgate), late one evening, from visiting the king at his rural palace of Havering; and he was seated alone in his cell, musing over an interview with Edward, which had evidently much disturbed him, when the door was abruptly thrown open; and pushing aside in haste the monk, who was about formally to announce him, a man so travel-stained in garb, and of a mien so disordered, rushed in, that Alred gazed at first as on a stranger, and not till the intruder spoke did he recognize Harold the Earl. Even then, so wild was the earl's eye, so dark his brow, and so livid his cheek, that it rather seemed the ghost

of the man than the man himself. Closing the door on the monk, the earl stood a moment on the threshold, with a breast heaving with emotions which he sought in vain to master; and, as if resigning the effort, he sprang forward, clasped the prelate's knees, bowed his head on his lap, and sobbed aloud. The good bishop, who had known all the sons of Godwin from their infancy, and to whom Harold was as dear as his own child, folding his hands over the earl's head, soothingly murmured a benediction.

"No, no," cried the earl, starting to his feet, and tossing the dishevelled hair from his eyes, "bless me not yet! Hear my tale first, and then say what comfort, what refuge, thy Church can bestow!"

Hurriedly then the earl poured forth the dark story, already known to the reader,—the prison at Belrem, the detention at William's court, the fears, the snares, the discourse by the river-side, the oath over the relics. This told, he continued, "I found myself in the open air, and knew not, till the light of the sun smote me, what might have passed into my soul. I was, before, as a corpse which a witch raises from the dead, endows with a spirit not its own,—passive to her hand, life-like, not living. Then, then it was as if a demon had passed from my body, laughing scorn at the foul things it had made the clay do. O, father, father! is there not absolution from this oath,—an oath I dare not keep? Rather perjure myself than betray my land!"

The prelate's face was as pale as Harold's, and it was some moments before he could reply.

"The Church can loose and unloose,—such is its delegated authority. But speak on; what saidst thou at the last to William?"

"I know not, remember not, aught save these words, 'Now, then, give me those for whom I placed myself in thy power; let me restore Haco to his fatherland, and Wolnoth to his mother's kiss, and wend home my way.' And, saints in heaven! what was the answer of this caitiff Norman, with his glittering eye and venomous smile? 'Haco thou shalt have, for he is an orphan, and an uncle's love is not so hot

as to burn from a distance; but Wolnoth, thy mother's son, must stay with me as a hostage for thine own faith. Godwin's hostages are released; Harold's hostage I retain: it is but a form, yet these forms are the bonds of princes.'

"I looked at him, and his eye quailed. And I said, 'That is not in the compact.' And William answered, 'No, but it is the seal to it.' Then I turned from the duke, and I called my brother to my side, and I said, 'Over the seas have I come for thee. Mount thy steed and ride by my side, for I will not leave the land without thee.' And Wolnoth answered, 'Nay, Duke William tells me that he hath made treaties with thee, for which I am still to be the hostage; and Normandy has grown my home, and I love William as my lord.' Hot words followed, and Wolnoth, chafed, refused entreaty and command, and suffered me to see that his heart was not with England. O, Mother, Mother, how shall I meet thine eye! So I returned with Haco. The moment I set foot on my native England, that moment her form seemed to rise from the tall cliffs, her voice to speak in the winds! All the glamour by which I had been bound forsook me; and I sprang forward in scorn, above the fear of the dead men's bones. Miserable overcraft of the snarer! Had my simple word alone bound me, or that word been ratified after slow and deliberate thought, by the ordinary oaths that appeal to God, far stronger the bond upon my soul than the mean surprise, the covert tricks, the insult, and the mocking fraud. But as I rode on, the oath pursued me; pale spectres mounted behind me on my steed, ghastly fingers pointed from the welkin; and then suddenly, O my father—I who, sincere in my simple faith, had, as thou knowest too well, never bowed submissive conscience to priest and Church—then suddenly I felt the might of some power, surer guide than that haughty conscience which had so in the hour of need betrayed me! Then I recognized that supreme tribunal, that mediator between Heaven and man, to which I might come with the dire secret of my soul, and say, as I say now, on my bended knee, O father, father, bid me die, or absolve me from my oath!"

Then Alred rose erect, and replied, "Did I need subterfuge, O son, I would say that William himself hath released thy bond, in detaining the hostage against the spirit of the guilty compact; that in the very words themselves of the oath lies the release,—*'if God aid thee.'* God aids no child to paricide,—and thou art England's child! But all school casuistry is here a meanness. Plain is the law that oaths extorted by compulsion, through fraud and in fear, the Church hath the right to loose; plainer still the law of God and of man, that an oath to commit crime it is a deadlier sin to keep than to forfeit. Wherefore, not absolving thee from the misdeed of a vow that, if trusting more to God's providence and less to man's vain strength and dim wit, thou wouldest never have uttered even for England's sake, leaving her to the angels,—not, I say, absolving thee from that sin, but pausing yet to decide what penance and atonement to fix to its committal, I do, in the name of the Power whose priest I am, forbid thee to fulfil the oath; I do release and absolve thee from all obligation thereto. And if in this I exceed my authority as Romish priest, I do but accomplish my duties as living man. To these gray hairs I take the sponsorship. Before this holy cross, kneel, O my son, with me, and pray that a life of truth and virtue may atone the madness of an hour."

So by the crucifix knelt the warrior and the priest.

CHAPTER II.

ALL other thought had given way to Harold's impetuous yearning to throw himself upon the Church, to hear his doom from the purest and wisest of its Saxon preachers. Had the prelate deemed his vow irrefragable, he would have died the Roman's death rather than live the traitor's life; and strange indeed was the revolution created in this man's character, that he, "so self-dependent," he who had hitherto deemed

himself his sole judge below of cause and action, now felt the whole life of his life committed to the word of a cloistered shaveling. All other thought had given way to that fiery impulse,—home, mother, Edith, king, power, policy, ambition! Till the weight was from his soul, he was as an outlaw in his native land. But when the next sun rose, and that awful burden was lifted from his heart and his being; when his own calm sense, returning, sanctioned the fiat of the priest; when, though with deep shame and rankling remorse at the memory of the vow, he yet felt exonerated, not from the guilt of having made, but the deadlier guilt of fulfilling it, all the objects of existence resumed their natural interest, softened and chastened, but still vivid in the heart restored to humanity. But from that time, Harold's stern philosophy and stoic ethics were shaken to the dust; re-created, as it were, by the breath of religion, he adopted its tenets even after the fashion of his age. The secret of his shame, the error of his conscience, humbled him. Those unlettered monks whom he had so despised—how had he lost the right to stand aloof from their control! how had his wisdom and his strength and his courage met unguarded the hour of temptation!

Yes, might the time come, when England could spare him from her side! when he, like Sweyn the outlaw, could pass a pilgrim to the Holy Sepulchre, and there, as the creed of the age taught, win full pardon for the single lie of his truthful life, and regain the old peace of his stainless conscience!

There are sometimes event and season in the life of man the hardest and most rational, when he is driven perforce to faith the most implicit and submissive,—as the storm drives the wings of the petrel over a measureless sea, till it falls tame, and rejoicing at refuge, on the sails of some lonely ship,—seasons when difficulties, against which reason seems stricken into palsy, leave him bewildered in dismay; when darkness, which experience cannot pierce, wraps the conscience, as sudden night wraps the traveller in the desert; when error entangles his feet in its inextricable web; when, still desirous of the right, he sees before him but a choice of evil; and the Angel of the Past, with a flaming sword, closes

on him the gates of the Future. Then, Faith flashes on him, with a light from the cloud; then, he clings to Prayer as a drowning wretch to the plank; then, that solemn authority which clothes the Priest, as the interpreter between the soul and the Divinity, seizes on the heart that trembles with terror and joy; then, that mysterious recognition of Atonement, of sacrifice, of purifying lustration (mystery which lies hid in the core of all religions), smooths the frown on the Past, removes the flaming sword from the Future. The Orestes escapes from the hounding Furies, and follows the oracle to the spot where the cleansing dews shall descend on the expiated guilt.

He who hath never known in himself, nor marked in another, such strange crisis in human fate, cannot judge of the strength and the weakness it bestows. But till he can so judge, the spiritual part of all history is to him a blank scroll, a sealed volume. He cannot comprehend what drove the fierce Heathen, cowering and humbled, into the fold of the Church; what peopled Egypt with eremites; what lined the roads of Europe and Asia with pilgrim homicides; what, in the elder world, while Jove yet reigned on Olympus, is couched in the dim traditions of the expiation of Apollo, the joy-god, descending into Hades; or why the sinner went blithe and light-hearted from the healing lustrations of Eleusis. In all these solemn riddles of the Jove world and the Christ's is involved the imperious necessity that man hath of repentance and atonement; through their clouds, as a rainbow, shines the covenant that reconciles the God and the man.

Now Life with strong arms plucked the reviving Harold to itself. Already the news of his return had spread through the city, and his chamber soon swarmed with joyous welcomes and anxious friends. But the first congratulations over, each had tidings, that claimed his instant attention, to relate. His absence had sufficed to loosen half the links of that ill-woven empire.

All the North was in arms. Northumbria had revolted as one man from the tyrannous cruelty of Tostig; the insurgents

had marched upon York; Tostig had fled in dismay, none as yet knew whither. The sons of Algar had sallied forth from their Mercian fortresses, and were now in the ranks of the Northumbrians, who it was rumoured had selected Morcar (the elder) in the place of Tostig.

Amidst these disasters, the king's health was fast decaying; his mind seemed bewildered and distraught; dark ravings of evil portent that had escaped from his lip in his mystic reveries and visions, had spread abroad, bandied, with all natural exaggerations, from lip to lip. The country was in one state of gloomy and vague apprehension.

But all would go well, now Harold the great Earl — Harold the stout, and the wise, and the loved — had come back to his native land!

In feeling himself thus necessary to England,— all eyes, all hopes, all hearts turned to him, and to him alone,— Harold shook the evil memories from his soul, as a lion shakes the dews from his mane. His intellect, that seemed to have burned dim and through smoke in scenes unfamiliar to its exercise, rose at once equal to the occasion. His words reassured the most despondent. His orders were prompt and decisive. While, to and fro, went forth his bodes and his riders, he himself leaped on his horse, and rode fast to Havering.

At length that sweet and lovely retreat broke on his sight, as a bower through the bloom of a garden. This was Edward's favourite abode: he had built it himself for his private devotions, allured by its woody solitudes and the gloom of its copious verdure. Here it was said, that once at night, wandering through the silent glades, and musing on heaven, the loud song of the nightingales had disturbed his devotions; with vexed and impatient soul, he had prayed that the music might be stilled: and since then, never more the nightingale was heard in the shades of Havering!

Threading the woodland, melancholy yet glorious with the hues of autumn, Harold reached the low and humble gate of the timber edifice, all covered with creepers and young ivy; and in a few moments more he stood in the presence of the king.

Edward raised himself with pain from the couch on which he was reclined,¹ beneath a canopy supported by columns and surmounted by carved symbols of the bell towers of Jerusalem; and his languid face brightened at the sight of Harold. Behind the king stood a man with a Danish battle-axe in his hand, the captain of the royal house-carles, who, on a sign from the king, withdrew.

"Thou art come back, Harold," said Edward then, in a feeble voice; and the earl, drawing near, was grieved and shocked at the alteration of his face. "Thou art come back, to aid this benumbed hand, from which the earthly sceptre is about to fall. Hush! for it is so, and I rejoice." Then examining Harold's features, yet pale with recent emotions, and now saddened by sympathy with the king, he resumed: "Well, man of this world, that went forth confiding in thine own strength, and in the faith of men of the world like thee, — well, were my warnings prophetic, or art thou contented with thy mission?"

"Alas!" said Harold, mournfully; "thy wisdom was greater than mine, O King; and dread the snares laid for me and our native land, under pretext of a promise made by thee to Count William, that he should reign in England, should he be your survivor."

Edward's face grew troubled and embarrassed. "Such promise," he said falteringly, "when I knew not the laws of England, nor that a realm could not pass like house and hyde by a man's single testament, might well escape from my thoughts, never too bent upon earthly affairs. But I marvel not that my cousin's mind is more tenacious and mundane. And verily, in those vague words, and from thy visit, I see the Future dark with fate and crimson with blood."

Then Edward's eyes grew locked and set, staring into space; and even that reverie, though it awed him, relieved Harold of much disquietude, for he rightly conjectured that on waking from it Edward would press him no more as to those details, and dilemmas of conscience, of which he felt that the arch-worshipper of relics was no fitting judge.

¹ Bayeux tapestry.

When the king, with a heavy sigh, evinced return from the world of vision, he stretched forth to Harold his wan, transparent hand, and said,—

“Thou seest the ring on this finger; it comes to me from above, a merciful token to prepare my soul for death. Perchance thou mayest have heard that once an aged pilgrim stopped me on my way from God’s House, and asked for alms; and I, having nought else on my person to bestow, drew from my finger a ring, and gave it to him, and the old man went his way, blessing me.”

“I mind me well of thy gentle charity,” said the earl; “for the pilgrim bruited it abroad as he passed, and much talk was there of it.”

The king smiled faintly. “Now this was years ago. It so chanced this year, that certain Englishers, on their way from the Holy Land, fell in with two pilgrims, and these last questioned them much of me. And one, with face venerable and benign, drew forth a ring, and said, ‘When thou reachest England, give thou this to the king’s own hand, and say, by this token, that on Twelfth-Day Eve he shall be with me. For what he gave to me, will I prepare recompense without bound; and already the saints deck for the new comer the halls where the worm never gnaws and the moth never frets.’ ‘And who,’ asked my subjects, amazed, ‘who shall we say speaketh thus to us?’ And the pilgrim answered, ‘He on whose breast leaned the Son of God, and my name is John!’¹ Wherewith the apparition vanished. This is the ring I gave to the pilgrim,—on the fourteenth night from thy parting miraculously returned to me. Wherefore, Harold, my time here is brief, and I rejoice that thy coming delivers me up from the cares of State to the preparation of my soul for the joyous day.”

Harold, suspecting under this incredible mission some wily device of the Norman, who, by thus warning Edward (of whose precarious health he was well aware), might induce his

¹ Ailred, De Vit. Edward Confess. — Many other chroniclers mention this legend, of which the stones of Westminster Abbey itself prated, in the statutes of Edward and the Pilgrim, placed over the arch in Dean’s Yard.

timorous conscience to take steps for the completion of the old promise,— Harold, we say, thus suspecting, in vain endeavoured to combat the king's presentiments; but Edward interrupted him, with displeased firmness of look and tone,—

"Come not thou, with thy human reasonings, between my soul and the messenger divine; but rather nerve and prepare thyself for the dire calamities that lie greeding in the days to come! Be thine things temporal. All the land is in rebellion. Anlaf, whom thy coming dismissed, hath just wearied me with sad tales of bloodshed and ravage. Go and hear him,— go hear the bodes of thy brother Tostig, who wait without in our hall; go, take axe, and take shield, and the men of earth's war, and do justice and right; and on thy return thou shalt see with what rapture sublime a Christian king can soar aloft from his throne! Go!"

More moved, and more softened, than in the former day he had been with Edward's sincere, if fanatical piety, Harold, turning aside to conceal his face, said,—

"Would, O royal Edward, that my heart, amidst worldly cares, were as pure and serene as thine! But, at least, what erring mortal may do to guard this realm, and face the evils thou foreseeest in the Far, that will I do; and perchance then, in my dying hour, God's pardon and peace may descend on me!" He spoke, and went.

The accounts he received from Anlaf (a veteran Anglo-Dane) were indeed more alarming than he had yet heard. Morcar, the bold son of Algar, was already proclaimed, by the rebels, Earl of Northumbria; the shires of Nottingham, Derby, and Lincoln had poured forth their hardy Dane populations on his behalf. All Mercia was in arms under his brother Edwin; and many of the Cymrian chiefs had already joined the ally of the butchered Gryffyth.

Not a moment did the earl lose in proclaiming the Herring-ban; sheaves of arrows were splintered, and the fragments, as announcing the War-Fyrd, were sent from thegn to thegn, and town to town. Fresh messengers were despatched to Gurth to collect the whole force of his own earldom, and haste by quick marches to London; and, these preparations

made, Harold returned to the metropolis, and with a heavy heart sought his mother, as his next care.

Githa was already prepared for his news; for Haco had of his own accord gone to break the first shock of disappointment. There was in this youth a noiseless sagacity that seemed ever provident for Harold. With his sombre, smileless cheek, and gloom of beauty, bowed as if beneath the weight of some invisible doom, he had already become linked indissolubly with the earl's fate, as its angel,—but as its angel of darkness!

To Harold's intense relief, Githa stretched forth her hands as he entered, and said, "Thou hast failed me, but against thy will! Grieve not; I am content!"

"Now our Lady be blessed, Mother—"

"I have told her," said Haco, who was standing, with arms folded, by the fire, the blaze of which reddened fitfully his hueless countenance with its raven hair,— "I have told thy mother that Wolnoth loves his captivity, and enjoys the cage. And the lady hath had comfort in my words."

"Not in thine only, son of Sweyn, but in those of fate; for before thy coming, I prayed against the long blind yearning of my heart, prayed that Wolnoth might *not* cross the sea with his kinsmen."

"How!" exclaimed the earl, astonished.

Githa took his arm, and led him to the farther end of the ample chamber, as if out of the hearing of Haco, who turned his face towards the fire, and gazed into the fierce blaze with musing, unwinking eyes.

"Couldst thou think, Harold, that in thy journey, that on the errand of so great fear and hope, I could sit brooding in my chair, and count the stitches on the tremulous hangings? No; day by day have I sought the lore of Hilda, and at night I have watched with her by the fount and the elm and the tomb: and I know that thou hast gone through dire peril,—the prison, the war, and the snare; and I know also, that his Fylgia hath saved the life of my Wolnoth; for had he returned to his native land, he had returned but to a bloody grave!"

"Says Hilda this?" said the earl, thoughtfully.

"So say the Vala, the rune, and the Scin-læca! and such is the doom that now darkens the brow of Haco! Seest thou not that the hand of death is in the hush of the smileless lip, and the glance of the unjoyous eye?"

"Nay, it is but the thought born to captive youth, and nurtured in solitary dreams. Thou hast seen Hilda?— and Edith, my mother,— Edith is—"'

"Well," said Githa, kindly, for she sympathized with that love which Godwin would have condemned; "though she grieved deeply after thy departure, and would sit for hours gazing into space, and moaning. But even ere Hilda divined thy safe return, Edith knew it; I was beside her at the time; she started up, and cried, 'Harold is in England!' 'How? Why thinkest thou so?' said I. And Edith answered, 'I feel it by the touch of the earth, by the breath of the air.' This is more than love, Harold. I knew two twins who had the same instinct of each other's comings and goings, and were present each to each even when absent: Edith is twin to thy soul. Thou goest to her now, Harold; thou wilt find there thy sister Thyra. The child hath drooped of late, and I besought Hilda to revive her, with herb and charm. Thou wilt come back, ere thou departest to aid Tostig, thy brother, and tell me how Hilda hath prospered with my ailing child?"'

"I will, my mother. Be cheered!— Hilda is a skilful nurse. And now bless thee, that thou hast not reproached me that my mission failed to fulfil my promise. Welcome even our kinswoman's sayings, sith they comfort thee for the loss of thy darling!"

Then Harold left the room, mounted his steed, and rode through the town towards the bridge. He was compelled to ride slowly through the streets, for he was recognized; and cheapman and mechanic rushed from house and from stall to hail the Man of the Land and the Time.

"All is safe now in England, for Harold is come back!" They seemed joyous as the children of the mariner, when, with wet garments, he struggles to shore through the storm.

And kind and loving were Harold's looks and brief words, as he rode with veiled bonnet through the swarming streets.

At length he cleared the town and the bridge; and the yellowing boughs of the orchards drooped over the road towards the Roman home, when, as he spurred his steed, he heard behind him hoofs as in pursuit, looked back, and beheld Haco. He drew rein. "What wantest thou, my nephew?"

"Thee!" answered Haco, briefly, as he gained his side. "Thy companionship."

"Thanks, Haco; but I pray thee to stay in my mother's house, for I would fain ride alone."

"Spurn me not from thee, Harold! This England is to me the land of the stranger; in thy mother's house I feel but the more the orphan. Henceforth I have devoted to thee my life! And my life my dead and dread father hath left to thee, as a doom or a blessing; wherefore cleave I to thy side, — cleave we in life and in death to each other!"

An undefined and cheerless thrill shot through the earl's heart as the youth spoke thus; and the remembrance that Haco's counsel had first induced him to abandon his natural hardy and gallant manhood, meet wile by wile, and thus suddenly entangle him in his own meshes, had already mingled an inexpressible bitterness with his pity and affection for his brother's son. But, struggling against that uneasy sentiment, as unjust towards one to whose counsel — however sinister, and now repented — he probably owed, at least, his safety and deliverance, he replied gently,—

"I accept thy trust and thy love, Haco! Ride with me, then; but pardon a dull comrade, for when the soul communes with itself the lip is silent."

"True," said Haco, "and I am no babbler. Three things are ever silent,— Thought, Destiny, and the Grave."

Each then, pursuing his own fancies, rode on fast, and side by side,— the long shadows of declining day struggling with a sky of unusual brightness, and thrown from the dim forest trees and the distant hillocks. Alternately through shade and through light rode they on; the bulls gazing on them from holt and glade, and the boom of the bittern sounding in its

peculiar mournfulness of tone as it rose from the dank pools that glistened in the western sun.

It was always by the rear of the house, where stood the ruined temple so associated with the romance of his life, that Harold approached the home of the Vala; and as now the hillock, with its melancholy diadem of stones, came in view, Haco for the first time broke the silence.

"Again—as in a dream!" he said abruptly. "Hill, ruin, grave-mound—but where the tall image of the mighty one?"

"Hast thou then seen this spot before?" asked the earl.

"Yea, as an infant here was I led by my father Sweyn; here too, from thy house yonder, dim seen through the fading leaves, on the eve before I left this land for the Norman, here did I wander alone; and there, by that altar, did the great Vala of the North chant her runes for my future."

"Alas! thou too!" murmured Harold; and then he asked aloud, "What said she?"

"That thy life and mine crossed each other in the skein; that I should save thee from a great peril, and share with thee a greater."

"Ah, youth," answered Harold, bitterly, "these vain prophecies of human wit guard the soul from no danger. They mislead us by riddles which our hot hearts interpret according to their own desires. Keep thou fast to youth's simple wisdom, and trust only to the pure spirit and the watchful God."

He suppressed a groan as he spoke, and springing from his steed, which he left loose, advanced up the hill. When he had gained the height, he halted, and made sign to Haco, who had also dismounted, to do the same. Halfway down the side of the slope which faced the ruined peristyle, Haco beheld a maiden, still young, and of beauty surpassing all that the court of Normandy boasted of female loveliness. She was seated on the sward; while a girl younger, and scarcely indeed grown into womanhood, reclined at her feet, and leaning her cheek upon her hand, seemed hushed in listening attention. In the face of the younger girl Haco recognized Thyra, the last-born of Githa, though he had but once seen her before,—the day ere he left England for the Norman

court,— for the face of the girl was but little changed, save that the eye was more mournful, and the cheek was paler.

And Harold's betrothed was singing, in the still autumn air, to Harold's sister. The song chosen was on that subject the most popular with the Saxon poets, the mystic life, death, and resurrection of the fabled Phœnix, and this rhymeless song, in its old native flow, may yet find some grace in the modern ear.

THE LAY OF THE PHŒNIX.¹

Shineth far hence — so
Sing the wise elders —
Far to the fire-east
The fairest of lands.

Daintily dight is that
Dearest of joy fields ;
Breezes all balm-y-filled
Glide through its groves.

There to the blest, ope
The high doors of heaven,
Sweetly sweep earthward
Their wavelets of song.

Frost robes the sward not,
Rusheth no hail-steel ;
Wind-cloud ne'er wanders,
Ne'er falleth the rain.

Warding the wood-holt,
Girt with gay wonder,
Sheen with the plumpy shine,
Phœnix abides.

¹ This ancient Saxon lay, apparently of the date of the tenth or eleventh century, may be found, admirably translated by Mr. George Stephens, in the "Archæologia," vol. xxx. p. 259. In the text the poem is much abridged, reduced into rhythm, and in some stanzas wholly altered from the original. But it is, nevertheless, greatly indebted to Mr. Stephens's translation, from which several lines are borrowed verbatim. The more careful reader will note the great aid given to a rhymeless metre by *alliteration*. I am not sure that this old Saxon mode of verse might not be profitably restored to our national muse.

Lord of the Lleod,¹
 Whose home is the air,
 Winters a thousand
 Abideth the bird.

Hapless and heavy then
 Waxeth the hazy wing ;
 Year-worn and old in the
 Whirl of the earth.

Then the high holt-top,
 Mounting, the bird soars ;
 There, where the winds sleep,
 He buildeth a nest ;

Gums the most precious, and
 Balms of the sweetest,
 Spices and odours, he
 Weaves in the nest.

There, in that sun-ark, lo,
 Waiteth he wistful ;
 Summer comes smiling, lo,
 Rays smite the pile !

Burdened with eld-years, and
 Weary with slow time,
 Slow in his odour nest
 Burneth the bird.

Up from those ashes, then,
 Springeth a rare fruit ;
 Deep in the rare fruit
 There coileth a worm.

Weaving bliss-meshee
 Around and around it,
 Silent and blissful, the
 Worm worketh on.

Lo, from the airy web,
 Blooming and brightsome,
 Young and exulting, the
 Phoenix breaks forth.

¹ People.

Round him the birds troop,
 Singing and hailing ;
 Wings of all glories
 Engarland the king.

Hymning and hailing,
 Through forest and sun-air,
 Hymning and hailing,
 And speaking him " King."

High flies the phœnix ;
 Escaped from the worm-web
 He soars in the sunlight,
 He bathes in the dew.

He visits his old haunts,
 The holt and the sun-hill,
 The founts of his youth, and
 The fields of his love.

The stars in the welkin,
 The blooms on the earth,
 Are glad in his gladness,
 Are young in his youth.

While round him the birds troop, the
 Hosts of the Himmel,¹
 Blisses of music, and
 Glories of wings,

Hymning and hailing,
 And filling the sun-air
 With music, and glory,
 And praise of the King.

As the lay ceased, Thyra said,—
 "Ah, Edith, who would not brave the funeral pyre to live
 again like the phœnix!"

"Sweet sister mine," answered Edith, "the singer doth
 mean to image out in the phœnix the rising of our Lord, in
 whom we all live again."

And Thyra said mournfully,—

"But the phœnix sees once more the haunts of his youth,—

¹ Heaven.

the things and places dear to him in his life before. Shall we do the same, O Edith?"

"It is the persons we love that make beautiful the haunts we have known," answered the betrothed. "Those persons at least we shall behold again, and wherever *they* are—there is heaven."

Harold could restrain himself no longer. With one bound he was at Edith's side, and with one wild cry of joy he clasped her to his heart.

"I knew that thou wouldst come to-night,—I knew it, Harold," murmured the betrothed.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE, full of themselves, Harold and Edith wandered, hand in hand, through the neighbouring glades; while into that breast which had forestalled, at least, in this pure and sublime union, the wife's privilege to soothe and console, the troubled man poured out the tale of the sole trial from which he had passed with defeat and shame,—Haco drew near to Thyra, and sat down by her side. Each was strangely attracted towards the other; there was something congenial in the gloom which they shared in common,—though in the girl the sadness was soft and resigned, in the youth it was stern and solemn. They conversed in whispers, and their talk was strange for companions so young; for, whether suggested by Edith's song, or the neighbourhood of the Saxon grave-stone, which gleamed on their eyes, gray and wan through the crom-mell, the theme they selected was of death. As if fascinated, as children often are, by the terrors of the Dark King, they dwelt on those images with which the northern fancy has associated the eternal rest,—on the shroud and the worm, and the mouldering bones, on the gibbering ghost, and the sorcerer's spell that could call the spectre from the grave. They

talked of the pain of the parting soul, parting while earth was yet fair, youth fresh, and joy not yet ripened from the blossom; of the wistful lingering look which glazing eyes would give to the latest sunlight it should behold on earth; and then pictured the shivering and naked soul, forced from the reluctant clay, wandering through cheerless space to the intermediate tortures, which the Church taught that none were so pure as not for a while to undergo, and hearing, as it wandered, the knell of the muffled bells and the burst of unavailing prayer. At length Haco paused abruptly and said,—

“But thou, cousin, hast before thee love and sweet life, and these discourses are not for thee.”

Thyra shook her head mournfully,—

“Not so, Haco; for when Hilda consulted the runes, while, last night, she mingled the herbs for my pain, which rests ever hot and sharp here,” and the girl laid her hand on her breast, “I saw that her face grew dark and overcast; and I felt, as I looked, that my doom was set. And when thou didst come so noiselessly to my side, with thy sad, cold eyes, O Haco, methought I saw the Messenger of Death. But thou art strong, Haco, and life will be long for thee; let us talk of life.”

Haco stooped down and pressed his lips upon the girl’s pale forehead.

“Kiss me too, Thyra.”

The child kissed him, and they sat silent and close by each other, while the sun set.

And as the stars rose, Harold and Edith joined them. Harold’s face was serene in the starlight, for the pure soul of his betrothed had breathed peace into his own; and, in his willing superstition, he felt as if, now restored to his guardian angel, the dead men’s bones had released their unhallowed hold.

But suddenly Edith’s hand trembled in his, and her form shuddered. Her eyes were fixed upon those of Haco.

“Forgive me, young kinsman, that I forget thee so long,” said the earl. “This is my brother’s son, Edith; thou hast not, that I remember, seen him before?”

"Yes, yes;" said Edith, falteringly.

"When, and where?"

Edith's soul answered the question, "*In a dream;*" but her lips were silent.

And Haco, rising, took her by the hand, while the earl turned to his sister,—that sister whom he was pledged to send to the Norman court; and Thyra said plaintively,—

"Take me in thine arms, Harold, and wrap thy mantle round me, for the air is cold."

The earl lifted the child to his breast, and gazed on her cheek long and wistfully; then questioning her tenderly, he took her within the house; and Edith followed with Haco.

"Is Hilda within?" asked the son of Sweyn.

"Nay, she hath been in the forest since noon," answered Edith with an effort, for she could not recover her awe of his presence.

"Then," said Haco, halting at the threshold, "I will go across the woodland to your house, Harold, and prepare your ceorls for your coming."

"I shall tarry here till Hilda returns," answered Harold, "and it may be late in the night ere I reach home; but Sex-wolf already hath my orders. At sunrise we return to London, and thence we march on the insurgents."

"All shall be ready. Farewell, noble Edith; and thou, Thyra my cousin, one kiss more to our meeting again."

The child fondly held out her arms to him, and as she kissed his cheek whispered,—

"In the grave, Haco!"

The young man drew his mantle around him, and moved away. But he did not mount his steed, which still grazed by the road, while Harold's, more familiar with the place, had found its way to the stall; nor did he take his path through the glades to the house of his kinsman. Entering the Druid temple, he stood musing by the Teuton tomb.

The night grew deeper and deeper, the stars more luminous, and the air more hushed, when a voice close at his side said, clear and abrupt,—

"What does Youth the restless by Death the still?"

It was the peculiarity of Haco that nothing ever seemed to startle or surprise him. In that brooding boyhood, the solemn, quiet, and sad experience, all fore-armed, of age, had something in it terrible and preternatural; so without lifting his eyes from the stone, he answered,—

“How sayest thou, O Hilda, that the dead are still?”

Hilda placed her hand on his shoulder, and stooped to look into his face.

“Thy rebuke is just, son of Sweyn. In Time and in the Universe there is no stillness! Through all eternity the state impossible to the soul is repose!—So again thou art in thy native land?”

“And for what end, Prophetess? I remember, when but an infant, who till then had enjoyed the common air and the daily sun, thou didst rob me evermore of childhood and youth. For thou didst say to my father, that ‘dark was the woof of my fate, and that its most glorious hour should be its last!’”

“But thou wert surely too childlike (I see thee now as thou wert then, stretched on the grass, and playing with thy father’s falcon!) — too childlike to heed my words.”

“Does the new ground reject the germs of the sower, or the young heart the first lessons of wonder and awe? Since then, Prophetess, Night hath been my comrade and Death my familiar. Rememberest thou again the hour when stealing, a boy, from Harold’s house in his absence — the night ere I left my land — I stood on this mound by thy side? Then did I tell thee that the sole soft thought that relieved the bitterness of my soul, when all the rest of my kinsfolk seemed to behold in me but the heir of Sweyn, the outlaw and homicide, was the love that I bore to Harold; but that that love itself was mournful and bodeful as the hwata¹ of distant sorrow. And thou didst take me, O Prophetess, to thy bosom, and thy cold kiss touched my lips and my brow; and there, beside this altar and grave-mound, by leaf and by water, by staff and by song, thou didst bid me take comfort; for that as the mouse gnawed the toils of the lion, so the exile obscure

¹ Omen.

should deliver from peril the pride and the prince of my House,—that from that hour with the skein of his fate should mine be entwined; and his fate was that of kings and of kingdoms. And then, when the joy flushed my cheek, and methought youth came back in warmth to the night of my soul,—then, Hilda, I asked thee if my life would be spared till I had redeemed the name of my father. Thy seid-staff passed over the leaves that, burning with fire-sparks, symbolled the life of the man, and from the third leaf the flame leaped up and died; and again a voice from thy breast, hollow, as if borne from a hill-top afar, made answer, ‘At thine entrance to manhood life bursts into blaze, and shrivels up into ashes.’ So I knew that the doom of the infant still weighed unannealed on the years of the man; and I come here to my native land as to glory and the grave. But,” said the young man, with a wild enthusiasm, “still with mine links the fate which is loftiest in England; and the rill and the river shall rush in one to the Terrible Sea.”

“I know not that,” answered Hilda, pale, as if in awe of herself: “for never yet hath the rune or the fount or the tomb revealed to me clear and distinct the close of the great course of Harold; only know I through his own stars his glory and greatness; and where glory is dim, and greatness is menaced, I know it but from the stars of others, the rays of whose influence blend with his own. So long, at least, as the fair and the pure one keeps watch in the still House of Life, the dark and the troubled one cannot wholly prevail. For Edith is given to Harold as the Fylgia, that noiselessly blesses and saves; and thou —” Hilda checked herself, and lowered her hood over her face, so that it suddenly became invisible.

“And I?” asked Haco, moving near to her side.

“Away, son of Sweyn; thy feet trample the grave of the mighty dead!”

Then Hilda lingered no longer, but took her way towards the house. Haco’s eye followed her in silence. The cattle, grazing in the great space of the crumbling peristyle, looked up as she passed; the watch-dogs, wandering through the

star-lit columns, came snorting round their mistress. And when she had vanished within the house, Haco turned to his steed.

"What matters," he murmured, "the answer which the Vala cannot or dare not give? To me is not destined the love of woman, nor the ambition of life. All I know of human affection binds me to Harold; all I know of human ambition is to share in his fate. This love is strong as hate, and terrible as doom,— it is jealous, it admits no rival. As the shell and the seaweed interlaced together, we are dashed on the rushing surge; whither? oh, whither?"

CHAPTER IV.

"I TELL thee, Hilda," said the earl, impatiently,— "I tell thee that I renounce henceforth all faith save in Him whose ways are concealed from our eyes. Thy seid and thy galdræ have not guarded me against peril, nor armed me against sin. Nay, perchance — but peace; I will no more tempt the dark art, I will no more seek to disentangle the awful truth from the juggling lie. All so foretold me I will seek to forget, — hope from no prophecy, fear from no warning. Let the soul go to the future under the shadow of God!"

"Pass on thy way as thou wilt, its goal is the same, whether seen or unmarked. Peradventure thou art wise," said the Vala, gloomily.

"For my country's sake — Heaven be my witness! — not my own," resumed the earl, "I have blotted my conscience and sullied my truth. My country alone can redeem me, by taking my life as a thing hallowed evermore to her service. Selfish ambition do I lay aside, selfish power shall tempt me no more; lost is the charm that I beheld in a throne, and, save for Edith — "

"No! not even for Edith," cried the betrothed, advancing,— "not even for Edith shalt thou listen to other voice than that of thy country and thy soul."

The earl turned round abruptly, and his eyes were moist.

"O Hilda," he cried, "see henceforth my only Vala; let that noble heart alone interpret to us the oracles of the future."

The next day Harold returned with Haco and a numerous train of his house-carles to the city. Their ride was as silent as that of the day before; but on reaching Southwark, Harold turned away from the bridge towards the left, gained the river-side, and dismounted at the house of one of his lithsmen (a franklin, or freed ceorl). Leaving there his horse, he summoned a boat, and, with Haco, was rowed over towards the fortified palace which then rose towards the west of London, jutting into the Thames, and which seems to have formed the outwork of the old Roman city. The palace, of remotest antiquity, and blending all work and architecture, Roman, Saxon, and Danish, had been repaired by Canute; and from a high window in the upper story, where were the royal apartments, the body of the traitor Edric Streone (the founder of the House of Godwin) had been thrown into the river.

"Whither go we, Harold?" asked the son of Sweyn.

"We go to visit the young Atheling, the natural heir to the Saxon throne," replied Harold, in a firm voice. "He lodges in the old palace of our kings."

"They say in Normandy that the boy is imbecile."

"That is not true," returned Harold. "I will present thee to him,— judge."

Haco mused a moment and said,—

"Methinks I divine thy purpose; is it not formed on the sudden, Harold?"

"It was the counsel of Edith," answered Harold, with evident emotion. "And yet, if that counsel prevail, I may lose the power to soften the Church and to call her mine."

"So thou wouldest sacrifice even Edith for thy country?"

"Since I have sinned, methinks I could," said the proud man, humbly.

The boat shot into a little creek, or rather canal, which then ran inland, beside the black and rotting walls of the fort. The two Earl-born leaped ashore, passed under a Roman arch, entered a court, the interior of which was rudely filled up by early Saxon habitations of rough timber work, already, since the time of Canute, falling into decay (as all things did which came under the care of Edward), and mounting a stair that ran along the outside of the house, gained a low narrow door, which stood open. In the passage within were one or two of the king's house-carles who had been assigned to the young Atheling, with liveries of blue, and Danish axes, and some four or five German servitors, who had attended his father from the emperor's court. One of these last ushered the noble Saxons into a low, forlorn antehall; and there, to Harold's surprise, he found Alred the Archbishop of York, and three thegns of high rank, and of lineage ancient and purely Saxon.

Alred approached Harold with a faint smile on his benign face.

"Methinks, and may I think aright! — thou comest hither with the same purpose as myself, and yon noble thegns."

"And that purpose?"

"Is to see and to judge calmly if, despite his years, we may find in the descendant of the Ironsides such a prince as we may command to our decaying king as his heir, and to the Witan as a chief fit to defend the land."

"Thou speakest the cause of my own coming. With your ears will I hear, with your eyes will I see; as ye judge, will judge I," said Harold, drawing the prelate towards the thegns, so that they might hear his answer.

The chiefs, who belonged to a party that had often opposed Godwin's House, had exchanged looks of fear and trouble when Harold entered; but at his words their frank faces showed equal surprise and pleasure.

Harold presented to them his nephew, with whose grave dignity of bearing beyond his years they were favourably impressed, though the good bishop sighed when he saw in his face the sombre beauty of the guilty sire. The group then

conversed anxiously on the declining health of the king, the disturbed state of the realm, and the expediency, if possible, of uniting all suffrages in favour of the fittest successor. And in Harold's voice and manner, as in Harold's heart, there was nought that seemed conscious of his own mighty stake and just hopes in that election. But as time wore, the faces of the thegns grew overcast; proud men and great satraps¹ were they, and they liked it ill that the boy-prince kept them so long in the dismal anteroom.

At length the German officer, who had gone to announce their coming, returned; and in words, intelligible indeed from the affinity between Saxon and German, but still disagreeably foreign to English ears, requested them to follow him into the presence of the Atheling.

In a room yet retaining the rude splendour with which it had been invested by Canute, a handsome boy, about the age of thirteen or fourteen, but seeming much younger, was engaged in the construction of a stuffed bird, a lure for a young hawk that stood blindfold on its perch. The employment made so habitual a part of the serious education of youth, that the thegns smoothed their brows at the sight, and deemed the boy worthily occupied. At another end of the room, a grave Norman priest was seated at a table on which were books and writing-implements; he was the tutor commissioned by Edward to teach Norman tongue and saintly lore to the Atheling. A profusion of toys strewed the floor, and some children of Edgar's own age were playing with them. His little sister Margaret² was seated seriously, apart from all the other children, and employed in needlework.

When Alred approached the Atheling, with a blending of reverent obeisance and paternal cordiality, the boy carelessly cried, in a barbarous jargon, half German, half Norman-French,—

¹ The Eastern word Satrapes (*Satrapes*) made one of the ordinary and most inappropriate titles (borrowed, no doubt, from the Byzantine Court), by which the Saxons, in their Latinity, honoured their simple nobles.

² Afterwards married to Malcolm of Scotland, through whom, by the female line, the present royal dynasty of England assumes descent from the Anglo-Saxon kings.

"There, come not too near, you scare my hawk. What are you doing? You trample my toys, which the good Norman bishop William sent me as a gift from the duke. Art thou blind, man?"

"My son," said the prelate, kindly, "these are the things of childhood; childhood ends sooner with princes than with common men. Leave thy lure and thy toys, and welcome these noble thegns, and address them, so please you, in our own Saxon tongue."

"Saxon tongue! — language of villeins! not I. Little do I know of it, save to scold a ceorl or a nurse. King Edward did not tell me to learn Saxon, but Norman! and Godfroi yonder says that if I know Norman well, Duke William will make me his knight. But I don't desire to learn anything more to-day." And the child turned peevishly from thegn and prelate.

The three Saxon lords interchanged looks of profound displeasure and proud disgust. But Harold, with an effort over himself, approached, and said winningly,—

"Edgar the Atheling, thou art not so young but thou knowest already that the great live for others. Wilt thou not be proud to live for this fair country and these noble men, and to speak the language of Alfred the Great?"

"Alfred the Great! they always weary me with Alfred the Great," said the boy, pouting. "Alfred the Great,—he is the plague of my life! If I am Atheling, men are to live for me, not I for them; and if you tease me any more, I will run away to Duke William in Rouen; Godfroi says I shall never be teased there!"

So saying, already tired of hawk and lure, the child threw himself on the floor with the other children, and snatched the toys from their hands.

The serious Margaret then rose quietly, and went to her brother, and said, in good Saxon,—

"Fie! if you behave thus, I shall call you NIDDERING!"

At the threat of that word, the vilest in the language,—that word which the lowest ceorl would forfeit life rather than endure,—a threat applied to the Atheling of England,

the descendant of Saxon heroes,— the three thegns drew close and watched the boy, hoping to see that he would start to his feet with wrath and in shame.

“Call me what you will, silly sister,” said the child, indifferently; “I am not so Saxon as to care for your ceorlish Saxon names.”

“Enew,” cried the proudest and greatest of the thegns, his very mustache curling with ire. “He who can be called nidering shall never be crowned king!”

“I don’t want to be crowned king, rude man, with your laidly mustache: I want to be made knight, and have a banderol and baldric. Go away!”

“We go, son,” said Alred, mournfully.

And with slow and tottering step he moved to the door, there he halted, turned back,— and the child was pointing at him in mimicry, while Godfroi, the Norman tutor, smiled as in pleasure. The prelate shook his head, and the group gained again the ante-hall.

“Fit leader of bearded men! fit king for the Saxon land!” cried a thegn. “No more of your Atheling, Alred my father!”

“No more of him, indeed!” said the prelate, mournfully.

“It is but the fault of his nurture and rearing,— a neglected childhood, a Norman tutor, German hirelings. We may remould yet the pliant clay,” said Harold.

“Nay,” returned Alred, “no leisure for such hopes, no time to undo what is done by circumstance, and, I fear, by nature. Ere the year is out the throne will stand empty in our halls.”

“Who then,” said Haco, abruptly, “who then (pardon the ignorance of youth wasted in captivity abroad!) — who then, failing the Atheling, will save this realm from the Norman Duke, who, I know well, counts on it as the reaper on the harvest ripening to his sickle?”

“Alas, who then?” murmured Alred.

“Who then?” cried the three thegns, with one voice; “why, the worthiest, the wisest, the bravest! Stand forth, Harold the Earl, Thou art the man!” And without awaiting his answer, they strode from the hall.

CHAPTER V.

AROUND Northampton lay the forces of Morcar, the choice of the Anglo-Dane men of Northumbria. Suddenly there was a shout as to arms from the encampment; and Morcar, the young earl, clad in his link mail save his helmet, came forth, and cried,—

“My men are fools to look that way for a foe; yonder lies Mercia, behind it the hills of Wales. The troops that come hitherward are those which Edwin my brother brings to our aid.”

Morcar’s words were carried into the host by his captains and war-bodes, and the shout changed from alarm into joy. As the cloud of dust through which gleamed the spears of the coming force rolled away, and lay lagging behind the march of the host, there rode forth from the van two riders. Fast and far from the rest they rode, and behind them, fast as they could, spurred two others, who bore on high, one the pennon of Mercia, one the red lion of North Wales. Right to the embankment and palisade which begirt Morcar’s camp rode the riders; and the head of the foremost was bare, and the guards knew the face of Edwin the Comely, Morcar’s brother. Morcar stepped down from the mound on which he stood, and the brothers embraced amidst the halloos of the forces.

“And welcome, I pray thee,” said Morcar, “our kinsman Caradoc, son of Gryffyth¹ the bold.”

So Morcar reached his hand to Caradoc, stepson to his sister Aldyth, and kissed him on the brow, as was the wont of our fathers. The young and crownless prince was scarce out of boyhood, but already his name was sung by the bards, and circled in the halls of Gwynedd with the Hirlas horn; for he had harried the Saxon borders, and given to fire and sword even the fortress of Harold himself.

¹ By his first wife; Aldyth was his second.

But while these three interchanged salutations, and ere yet the mixed Mercians and Welch had gained the encampment, from a curve in the opposite road, towards Towcester and Dunstable, broke the flash of mail like a river of light; trumpets and fifes were heard in the distance; and all in Morcar's host stood hushed but stern, gazing anxious and afar, as the coming armament swept on. And from the midst were seen the Martlets and Cross of England's king, and the Tiger heads of Harold,—banners which, seen together, had planted victory on every tower, on every field, towards which they had rushed on the winds.

Retiring, then, to the central mound, the chiefs of the insurgent force held their brief council.

The two young earls, whatever their ancestral renown, being yet new themselves to fame and to power, were submissive to the Anglo-Dane chiefs, by whom Morcar had been elected. And these, on recognizing the standard of Harold, were unanimous in advice to send a peaceful deputation, setting forth their wrongs under Tostig, and the justice of their cause. "For the earl," said Gamel Beorn (the head and front of that revolution), "is a just man, and one who would shed his own blood rather than that of any other free-born dweller in England; and he will do us right."

"What, against his own brother?" cried Edwin.

"Against his own brother, if we convince but his reason," returned the Anglo-Dane.

And the other chiefs nodded assent. Caradoc's fierce eyes flashed fire; but he played with his torque, and spoke not.

Meanwhile, the vanguard of the king's force had defiled under the very walls of Northampton, between the town and the insurgents; and some of the light-armed scouts who went forth from Morcar's camp to gaze on the procession, with that singular fearlessness which characterized, at that period, the rival parties in civil war, returned to say that they had seen Harold himself in the foremost line, and that he was not in mail.

This circumstance the insurgent thegns received as a good omen; and having already agreed on the deputation, about a

score of the principal thegns of the North went sedately towards the hostile lines.

By the side of Harold — armed in mail, with his face concealed by the strange Sicilian nose-piece used then by most of the Northern nations — had ridden Tostig, who had joined the earl on his march, with a scanty band of some fifty or sixty of his Danish house-carles. All the men throughout broad England that he could command or bribe to his cause, were those fifty or sixty hireling Danes. And it seemed that already there was dispute between the brothers, for Harold's face was flushed, and his voice stern, as he said, "Rate me as thou wilt, brother, but I cannot advance at once to the destruction of my fellow Englishmen without summons and attempt at treaty,— as has ever been the custom of our ancient heroes and our own House."

"By all the fiends of the North!" exclaimed Tostig, "it is foul shame to talk of treaty and summons to robbers and rebels. For what art thou here but for chastisement and revenge?"

"For justice and right, Tostig."

"Ha! thou comest not, then, to aid thy brother?"

"Yes, if justice and right are, as I trust, with him."

Before Tostig could reply, a line was suddenly cleared through the armed men; and with bare heads, and a monk lifting the rood on high, amidst the procession advanced the Northumbrian Danes.

"By the red sword of Saint Olave!" cried Tostig, "yonder come the traitors, Gamel Beorn and Gloneion! You will not hear them? If so, I will not stay to listen. I have but my axe for my answer to such knaves."

"Brother, brother, those men are the most valiant and famous chiefs in thine earldom. Go, Tostig, thou art not now in the mood to hear reason. Retire into the city; summon its gates to open to the king's flag. I will hear the men."

"Beware how thou judge, save in thy brother's favour!" growled the fierce warrior; and, tossing his arm on high with a contemptuous gesture, he spurred away towards the gates.

Then Harold, dismounting, stood on the ground, under the standard of his king, and round him came several of the Saxon chiefs, who had kept aloof during the conference with Tostig.

The Northumbrians approached, and saluted the earl with grave courtesy.

Then Gamel Beorn began. But much as Harold had feared and foreboded as to the causes of complaint which Tostig had given to the Northumbrians, all fear, all foreboding, fell short of the horrors now deliberately unfolded; not only extortion of tribute the most rapacious and illegal, but murder the fiercest and most foul. Thegns of high birth, without offence or suspicion, but who had either excited Tostig's jealousy, or resisted his exactions, had been snared under peaceful pretexts into his castle,¹ and butchered in cold blood by his house-carles. The cruelties of the old heathen Danes seemed revived in the bloody and barbarous tale.

"And now," said the thegn, in conclusion, "canst thou condemn us that we rose?—no partial rising,—rose all Northumbria! At first but two hundred thegns, strong in our course, we swelled into the might of a people. Our wrongs found sympathy beyond our province, for liberty spreads over human hearts as fire over a heath. Wherever we march, friends gather round us. Thou warrest not on a handful of rebels,—half England is with us!"

"And ye, thegns," answered Harold, "ye have ceased to war against Tostig your earl. Ye war now against the King and the Law. Come with your complaints to your Prince and your Witan, and, if they are just, ye are stronger than in yonder palisades and streets of steel."

"And so," said Gamel Beorn, with marked emphasis, "now thou art in England, O noble Earl,—so are we willing to come. But when thou wert absent from the land, justice seemed to abandon it to force and the battle-axe."

"I would thank you for your trust," answered Harold, deeply moved. "But justice in England rests not on the presence and life of a single man. And your speech I must

¹ Flor., Wig.

not accept as a grace, for it wrongs both my King and his Council. These charges ye have made, but ye have not proved them. Armed men are not proofs; and granting that hot blood and mortal infirmity of judgment have caused Tostig to err against you and the right, think still of his qualities to reign over men whose lands and whose rivers lie ever exposed to the dread Northern sea-kings. Where will ye find a chief with arm as strong, and heart as dauntless? By his mother's side he is allied to your own lineage. And for the rest, if ye receive him back to his earldom, not only do I, Harold in whom you profess to trust, pledge full oblivion of the past, but I will undertake, in his name, that he shall rule you well for the future, according to the laws of King Canute."

"That will we not hear," cried the thegns, with one voice; while the tones of Gamel Beorn, rough with the rattling Danish burr, rose above all, "for we were born free. A proud and bad chief is by us not to be endured; we have learned from our ancestors to live free or die!"

A murmur, not of condemnation, at these words, was heard amongst the Saxon chiefs round Harold; and beloved and revered as he was, he felt that, had he the heart, he had scarce the power, to have coerced those warriors to march at once on their countrymen in such a cause. But foreseeing great evil in the surrender of his brother's interests, whether by lowering the king's dignity to the demands of armed force, or sending abroad in all his fierce passions a man so highly connected with Norman and Dane, so vindictive and so grasping, as Tostig, the earl shunned further parley at that time and place. He appointed a meeting in the town with the chiefs; and requested them, meanwhile, to reconsider their demands, and at least shape them so that they could be transmitted to the king, who was then on his way to Oxford.

It is in vain to describe the rage of Tostig, when his brother gravely repeated to him the accusations against him, and asked for his justification. Justification he could give not. His idea of law was but force, and by force alone he demanded now to be defended. Harold, then, wishing not alone to be judge in his brother's cause, referred further discussion to

the chiefs of the various towns and shires, whose troops had swelled the War-Fyrd; and to them he bade Tostig plead his cause.

Vain as a woman, while fierce as a tiger, Tostig assented, and in that assembly he rose, his gonna all blazing with crimson and gold, his hair all curled and perfumed as for a banquet; and such, in a half-barbarous day, the effect of person, especially when backed by warlike renown, that the Proceres were half disposed to forget, in admiration of the earl's surpassing beauty of form, the dark tales of his hideous guilt. But his passions hurrying him away ere he had gained the middle of his discourse, so did his own relation condemn himself, so clear became his own tyrannous misdeeds, that the Englishmen murmured aloud their disgust, and their impatience would not suffer him to close.

"Enough," cried Vebba, the blunt thegn from Saxon Kent; "it is plain that neither king nor Witan can replace thee in thine earldom. Tell us not further of these atrocities; or by 'r Lady, if the Northumbrians had chased thee not, we would."

"Take treasure and ship, and go to Baldwin in Flanders," said Thorold, a great Anglo-Dane from Lincolnshire, "for even Harold's name can scarce save thee from outlawry."

Tostig glared round on the assembly, and met but one common expression in the face of all.

"These are thy henchmen, Harold!" he said through his gnashing teeth; and, without vouchsafing further word, strode from the council-hall.

That evening he left the town and hurried to tell to Edward the tale that had so miscarried with the chiefs. The next day, the Northumbrian delegates were heard; and they made the customary proposition in those cases of civil differences, to refer all matters to the king and the Witan, each party remaining under arms meanwhile.

This was finally acceded to. Harold repaired to Oxford, where the king (persuaded to the journey by Alred, foreseeing what would come to pass) had just arrived.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Witan was summoned in haste. Thither came the young earls Morcar and Edwin; but Caradoc, chafing at the thought of peace, retired into Wales with his wild band.

Now, all the great chiefs, spiritual and temporal, assembled in Oxford for the decree of that Witan on which depended the peace of England. The imminence of the time made the concourse of members entitled to vote in the assembly even larger than that which had met for the inlawry of Godwin. There was but one thought uppermost in the minds of men, to which the adjustment of an earldom, however mighty, was comparatively insignificant,—namely, the succession of the kingdom. That thought turned instinctively and irresistibly to Harold.

The evident and rapid decay of the king; the utter failure of all male heir in the House of Cerdic, save only the boy Edgar,—whose character (which throughout life remained puerile and frivolous) made the minority which excluded him from the throne seem cause rather for rejoicing than grief, and whose rights, even by birth, were not acknowledged by the general tenor of the Saxon laws, which did not recognize as heir to the crown the son of a father who had not himself been crowned;¹—forebodings of coming evil and danger, originating in Edward's perturbed visions; revivals of obscure and till then forgotten prophecies, ancient as the days of Merlin; rumours, industriously fomented into certainty by Haco, whose whole soul seemed devoted to Harold's cause, of

¹ This truth has been overlooked by writers, who have maintained the Atheling's right as if incontestable. "An opinion prevailed," says Palgrave ("English Commonwealth," pp. 559, 560), "that if the Atheling was born before his father and mother were ordained to the royal dignity, the crown did not descend to the child of uncrowned ancestors." Our great legal historian quotes Eadmer, "De Vit. Sanct. Dunstan," p. 220, for the objection made to the succession of Edward the Martyr, on this score.

the intended claim of the Norman Count to the throne,— all concurred to make the election of a man matured in camp and council doubly necessary to the safety of the realm.

Warm favourers, naturally, of Harold were the genuine Saxon population, and a large part of the Anglo-Danish,— all the thegns in his vast earldom of Wessex, reaching to the southern and western coasts, from Sandwich and the mouth of the Thames to the Land's End in Cornwall; and including the free men of Kent, whose inhabitants even from the days of Cæsar had been considered in advance of the rest of the British population, and from the days of Hengist had exercised an influence that nothing save the warlike might of the Anglo-Danes counterbalanced. With Harold, too, were many of the thegns from his earlier earldom of East Anglia, comprising the county of Essex, great part of Hertfordshire, and so, reaching into Cambridge, Huntingdon, Norfolk, and Ely. With him were all the wealth, intelligence, and power of London, and most of the trading towns; with him all the veterans of the armies he had led; with him too, generally throughout the empire, was the force, less distinctly demarcated, of public and national feeling.

Even the priests, save those immediately about the court, forgot, in the exigency of the time, their ancient and deep-rooted dislike to Godwin's House; they remembered, at least, that Harold had never, in foray or feud, plundered a single convent, or in peace, and through plot, appropriated to himself a single hyde of Church land; and that was more than could have been said of any other earl of the age,— even of Leofric the Holy. They caught — as a Church must do, when so intimately, even in its illiterate errors, allied with the people as the old Saxon Church was — the popular enthusiasm. Abbot combined with thegn in zeal for Earl Harold.

The only party that stood aloof was the one that espoused the claims of the young sons of Algar. But this party was indeed most formidable; it united all the old friends of the virtuous Leofric, of the famous Siward; it had a numerous party even in East Anglia (in which earldom Algar had succeeded Harold); it comprised nearly all the thegns in Mercia

(the heart of the country) and the population of Northumbria; and it involved in its wide range the terrible Welch on the one hand, and the Scottish domain of the sub-king Malcolm, himself a Cumbrian, on the other, despite Malcolm's personal predilections for Tostig, to whom he was strongly attached. But then the chiefs of this party, while at present they stood aloof, were all, with the exception perhaps of the young earls themselves, disposed, on the slightest encouragement, to blend their suffrage with the friends of Harold; and his praise was as loud on their lips as on those of the Saxons from Kent, or the burghers from London. All factions, in short, were willing, in this momentous crisis, to lay aside old dissensions; it depended upon the conciliation of the Northumbrians, upon a fusion between the friends of Harold and the supporters of the young sons of Algar, to form such a concurrence of interests as must inevitably bear Harold to the throne of the empire.

Meanwhile, the earl himself wisely and patriotically deemed it right to remain neuter in the approaching decision between Tostig and the young earls. He could not be so unjust and so mad as to urge to the utmost (and risk in the urging) his party influence on the side of oppression and injustice, solely for the sake of his brother; nor, on the other, was it decorous or natural to take part himself against Tostig; nor could he, as a statesman, contemplate without anxiety and alarm the transfer of so large a portion of the realm to the vice-kingship of the sons of his old foe,—rivals to his power, at the very time when, even for the sake of England alone, that power should be the most solid and compact.

But the final greatness of a fortunate man is rarely made by any violent effort of his own. He has sown the seeds in the time foregone, and the ripe time brings up the harvest. His fate seems taken out of his own control: greatness seems thrust upon him. He has made himself, as it were, a *want* to the nation, a thing necessary to it; he has identified himself with his age, and in the wreath or the crown on his brow, the age itself seems to put forth its flower.

Tostig, lodging apart from Harold in a fort near the gate of

Oxford, took slight pains to conciliate foes or make friends,—trusting rather to his representations to Edward (who was wroth with the rebellious House of Algar) of the danger of compromising the royal dignity by concessions to armed insurgents.

It was but three days before that for which the Witan was summoned; most of its members had already assembled in the city; and Harold, from the window of the monastery in which he lodged, was gazing thoughtfully into the streets below, where, with the gay dresses of the thegns and cnechts, blended the grave robes of ecclesiastic and youthful scholar,—for to that illustrious University (pillaged and persecuted by the sons of Canute), Edward had, to his honour, restored the schools,—when Haco entered, and announced to him that a numerous body of thegns and prelates, headed by Alred, Archbishop of York, craved an audience.

“Knowest thou the cause, Haco?”

The youth's cheek was yet more pale than usual, as he answered slowly,—

“Hilda's prophecies are ripening into truths.”

The earl started, and his old ambition reviving, flushed on his brow, and sparkled from his eye; he checked the joyous emotion, and bade Haco briefly admit the visitors.

They came in, two by two,—a body so numerous that they filled the ample chamber; and Harold, as he greeted each, beheld the most powerful lords of the land, the highest dignitaries of the Church, and, oft and frequent, came old foe by the side of trusty friend. They all paused at the foot of the narrow dais on which Harold stood, and Alred repelled by a gesture his invitation to the foremost to mount the platform.

Then Alred began a harangue, simple and earnest. He described briefly the condition of the country; touched with grief and with feeling on the health of the king, and the failure of Cerdic's line. He stated honestly his own strong wish, if possible, to have concentrated the popular suffrages on the young Atheling; and under the emergence of the case, to have waived the objection to his immature years. But as

distinctly and emphatically he stated, that that hope and intent he had now formally abandoned, and that there was but one sentiment on the subject with all the chiefs and dignitaries of the realm.

"Wherefore," continued he, "after anxious consultations with each other, those whom you see around have come to you: yea, to you, Earl Harold, we offer our hands and hearts to do our best to prepare for you the throne on the demise of Edward, and to seat you thereon as firmly as ever sat King of England and son of Cerdic,— knowing that in you, and in you alone, we find the man who reigns already in the English heart; to whose strong arm we can trust the defence of our land; to whose just thoughts, our laws. As I speak, so think we all!"

With downcast eyes, Harold heard; and but by a slight heaving of his breast under his crimson robe could his emotion be seen. But as soon as the approving murmur, that succeeded the prelate's speech, had closed, he lifted his head, and answered,—

"Holy father, and you, Right Worthy my fellow-thegns, if ye could read my heart at this moment, believe that you would not find there the vain joy of aspiring man, when the greatest of earthly prizes is placed within his reach. There you would see, with deep and wordless gratitude for your trust and your love, grave and solemn solicitude, earnest desire to divest my decision of all mean thought of self, and judge only whether indeed, as king or as subject, I can best guard the weal of England. Pardon me, then, if I answer you not as ambition alone would answer; neither deem me insensible to the glorious lot of presiding, under heaven, and by the light of our laws, over the destinies of the English realm,— if I pause to weigh well the responsibilities incurred, and the obstacles to be surmounted. There is that on my mind that I would fain unbosom, not of a nature to discuss in an assembly so numerous, but which I would rather submit to a chosen few whom you yourselves may select to hear me, in whose cool wisdom, apart from personal love to me, ye may best confide,— your most veteran thegns, your most

honoured prelates: To them will I speak, to them make clean my bosom; and to their answer, their counsels, will I in all things defer,—whether with loyal heart to serve another, whom, hearing me, they may decide to choose; or to fit my soul to bear, not unworthily, the weight of a kingly crown."

Alred lifted his mild eyes to Harold, and there were both pity and approval in his gaze, for he divined the earl.

"Thou hast chosen the right course, my son; and we will retire at once, and elect those with whom thou mayst freely confer, and by whose judgment thou mayst righteously abide."

The prelate turned, and with him went the conclave.

Left alone with Haco, the last said abruptly,—

"Thou wilt not be so indiscreet, O Harold, as to confess thy compelled oath to the fraudulent Norman?"

"That is my design," replied Harold, coldly.

The son of Sweyn began to remonstrate, but the earl cut him short.

"If the Norman say that he has been deceived in Harold, never so shall say the men of England. Leave me. I know not why, Haco, but in thy presence, at times, there is a glamour as strong as in the spells of Hilda. Go, dear boy; the fault is not in thee, but in the superstitious infirmities of a man who hath once lowered, or, it may be, too highly strained, his reason to the things of a haggard fancy. Go! and send to me my brother Gurth. I would have him alone of my House present at this solemn crisis of its fate."

Haco bowed his head, and went.

In a few moments more, Gurth came in. To this pure and spotless spirit Harold had already related the events of his unhappy visit to the Norman; and he felt, as the young chief pressed his hand, and looked on him with his clear and loving eyes, as if Honour made palpable stood by his side.

Six of the ecclesiastics, most eminent for Church learning,—small as was that which they could boast, compared with the scholars of Normandy and the Papal States, but at least more intelligent and more free from mere formal monasticism than most of their Saxon contemporaries,—and six of the chiefs most renowned for experience in war or council,

selected under the sagacious promptings of Alred, accompanied that prelate to the presence of the earl.

"Close, thou! close! close! Gurth," whispered Harold; "for this is a confession against man's pride, and sorely doth it shame,— so that I would have thy bold sinless heart beating near to mine."

Then, leaning his arm upon his brother's shoulder, and in a voice, the first tones of which, as betraying earnest emotion, irresistibly chained and affected his noble audience, Harold began his tale.

Various were the emotions, though all more akin to terror than repugnance, with which the listeners heard the earl's plain and candid recital.

Among the lay-chiefs the impression made by the compelled oath was comparatively slight: for it was the worst vice of the Saxon laws, to entangle all charges, from the smallest to the greatest, in a reckless multiplicity of oaths,¹ to the grievous loosening of the bonds of truth; and oaths then had become almost as much mere matter of legal form, as certain oaths — bad relic of those times! — still existing in our parliamentary and collegiate proceedings, are deemed by men, not otherwise dishonourable, even now. And to no kind of oath was more latitude given than to such as related to fealty to a chief; for these, in the constant rebellions which happened year after year, were openly violated, and without reproach. Not a sub-king in Wales who harried the border, not an earl who raised banner against the Basileus of Britain, but infringed his oath to be good man and true to the lord paramount; and even William the Norman himself never found his oath of fealty stand in his way, whenever he deemed it right and expedient to take arms against his suzerain of France.

On the churchmen the impression was stronger and more serious: not that made by the oath itself, but by the relics on which the hand had been laid. They looked at each other,

¹ See the judicious remarks of Henry, "History of Britain," on this head. From the lavish abuse of oaths, perjury had come to be reckoned one of the national vices of the Saxon.

doubtful and appalled, when the earl ceased his tale; while only among the laymen circled a murmur of mingled wrath at William's bold design on their native land, and of scorn at the thought that an oath, surprised and compelled, should be made the instrument of treason to a whole people.

"Thus," said Harold, after a pause, "thus have I made clear to you my conscience, and revealed to you the only obstacle between your offers and my choice. From the keeping of an oath so extorted, and so deadly to England, this venerable prelate and mine own soul have freed me. Whether as king or as subject, I shall alike revere the living and their long posterity more than the dead men's bones, and, with sword and with battle-axe, hew out against the invader my best atonement for the lip's weakness and the heart's desertion. But whether, knowing what hath passed, ye may not deem it safer for the land to elect another king,—this it is which, free and fore-thoughtful of every chance, ye should now decide."

With these words he stepped from the dais, and retired into the oratory that adjoined the chamber, followed by Gurth. The eyes of the priests then turned to Alred, and to them the prelate spoke as he had done before to Harold; he distinguished between the oath and its fulfilment, between the lesser sin and the greater,—the one which the Church could absolve, the one which no Church had the right to exact, and which, if fulfilled, no penance could expiate. He owned frankly, nevertheless, that it was the difficulties so created that had made him incline to the Atheling; but, convinced of that prince's incapacity, even in the most ordinary times, to rule England, he shrunk yet more from such a choice, when the swords of the Norman were already sharpening for contest. Finally he said, "If a man as fit to defend us as Harold can be found, let us prefer him; if not—"

"There is no other man!" cried the thegns with one voice. "And," said a wise old chief, "had Harold sought to play a trick to secure the throne, he could not have devised one more sure than the tale he hath now told us. What! just when we are most assured that the doughtiest and deadliest foe that

our land can brave waits but for Edward's death to enforce on us a stranger's yoke—what! shall we for that very reason deprive ourselves of the only man able to resist him? Harold hath taken an oath! God wot, who among us have not taken some oath at law for which they have deemed it meet afterwards to do a penance, or endow a convent? The wisest means to strengthen Harold against that oath is to show the moral impossibility of fulfilling it, by placing him on the throne. The best proof we can give to this insolent Norman that England is not for prince to leave, or subject to barter, is to choose solemnly in our Witan the very chief whom his frauds prove to us that he fears the most. Why, William would laugh in his own sleeve to summon a king to descend from his throne to do him the homage which that king, in the different capacity of subject, had (we will grant, even willingly) promised to render."

This speech spoke all the thoughts of the laymen, and, with Alred's previous remarks, reassured all the ecclesiastics. They were easily induced to believe that the usual Church penances, and ample Church gifts, would suffice for the insult offered to the relics: and—if they in so grave a case outstripped, in absolution, an authority amply sufficing for all ordinary matters—Harold, as king, might easily gain from the Pope himself that full pardon and shrift, which as mere earl, against the Prince of the Normans, he would fail of obtaining.

These or similar reflections soon terminated the suspense of the select council; and Alred sought the earl in the oratory, to summon him back to the conclave. The two brothers were kneeling side by side before the little altar; and there was something inexpressibly touching in their humble attitudes, their clasped supplicating hands, in that moment when the crown of England rested above their House.

The brothers rose, and at Alred's sign followed the prelate into the council-room. Alred briefly communicated the result of the conference; and with an aspect, and in a tone, free alike from triumph and indecision, Harold replied:—

"As ye will, so will I. Place me only where I can most

serve the common cause. Remain you now, knowing my secret, a chosen and standing council: too great is my personal stake in this matter to allow my mind to be unbiassed; judge ye, then, and decide for me in all things: your minds should be calmer and wiser than mine; in all things I will abide by your counsel; and thus I accept the trust of a nation's freedom."

Each thegn then put his hand into Harold's, and called himself Harold's man.

"Now, more than ever," said the wise old thegn who had before spoken, "will it be needful to heal all dissension in the kingdom,—to reconcile with us Mercia and Northumbria, and make the kingdom one against the foe. You, as Tostig's brother, have done well to abstain from active interference; you do well to leave it to us to negotiate the necessary alliance between all brave and good men."

"And to that end, as imperative for the public weal, you consent," said Alred, thoughtfully, "to abide by our advice, whatever it be?"

"Whatever it be, so that it serve England," answered the earl.

A smile, somewhat sad, flitted over the prelate's pale lips, and Harold was once more alone with Gurth.

CHAPTER VII.

THE soul of all council and cabal on behalf of Harold, which had led to the determination of the principal chiefs, and which now succeeded it,—was Haco.

His rank as son of Sweyn, the first-born of Godwin's House,—a rank which might have authorized some pretensions on his own part,—gave him all field for the exercise of an intellect singularly keen and profound. Accustomed to an atmosphere of practical state-craft in the Norman court, with faculties

sharpened from boyhood by vigilance and meditation, he exercised an extraordinary influence over the simple understandings of the homely clergy and the uncultured thegns. Impressed with the conviction of his early doom, he felt no interest in the objects of others; but equally believing that whatever of bright and brave and glorious in his brief, condemned career was to be reflected on him from the light of Harold's destiny, the sole desire of a nature, which, under other auspices, would have been intensely daring and ambitious, was to administer to Harold's greatness. No prejudice, no principle, stood in the way of this dreary enthusiasm. As a father, himself on the brink of the grave, schemes for the worldly grandeur of the son, in whom he confounds and melts his own life, so this sombre and predestined man, dead to earth and to joy and the emotions of the heart, looked beyond his own tomb, to that existence in which he transferred and carried on his ambition.

If the leading agencies of Harold's memorable career might be, as it were, symbolized and allegorized by the living beings with which it was connected,—as Edith was the representative of stainless Truth, as Gurth was the type of dauntless Duty, as Hilda embodied aspiring Imagination,—so Haco seemed the personator of Worldly Wisdom. And cold in that worldly wisdom Haco laboured on, now conferring with Alred and the partisans of Harold; now closeted with Edwin and Morcar; now gliding from the chamber of the sick king. That wisdom foresaw all obstacles, smoothed all difficulties; ever calm, never resting; marshalling and harmonizing the things to be, like the ruthless hand of a tranquil fate. But there was one with whom Haco was more often than with all others,—one whom the presence of Harold had allured to that anxious scene of intrigue, and whose heart leaped high at the hopes whispered from the smileless lips of Haco.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was the second day after that which assured him the allegiance of the thegns that a message was brought to Harold from the Lady Aldyth. She was in Oxford, at a convent, with her young daughter by the Welch King; she prayed him to visit her. The earl, whose active mind, abstaining from the intrigues around him, was delivered up to the thoughts, restless and feverish, which haunt the repose of all active minds, was not unwilling to escape awhile from himself. He went to Aldyth. The royal widow had laid by the signs of mourning; she was dressed with the usual stately and loose-robed splendour of Saxon matrons, and all the proud beauty of her youth was restored to her cheek. At her feet was that daughter who afterwards married the Fleance so familiar to us in Shakspeare, and became the ancestral mother of those Scottish kings who had passed, in pale shadows, across the eyes of Macbeth;¹ by the side of that child, Harold to his surprise saw the ever ominous face of Haco.

But proud as was Aldyth, all pride seemed humbled into woman's sweeter emotions at the sight of the earl, and she was at first unable to command words to answer his greeting.

Gradually, however, she warmed into cordial confidence. She touched lightly on her past sorrows; she permitted it to be seen that her lot with the fierce Gryffyth had been one not more of public calamity than of domestic grief, and that in the natural awe and horror which the murder of her lord had caused, she felt rather for the ill-starred king than the beloved spouse. She then passed to the differences still existing between her House and Harold's, and spoke well and wisely of the desire of the young earls to conciliate his grace and favour.

¹ And so, from Gryffyth, beheaded by his subjects, descended Charles Stuart.

While thus speaking, Morcar and Edwin, as if accidentally, entered, and their salutations of Harold were such as became their relative positions: reserved, not distant, — respectful, not servile. With the delicacy of high natures, they avoided touching on the cause before the Witan (fixed for the morrow), on which depended their earldoms or their exile.

Harold was pleased by their bearing, and attracted towards them by the memory of the affectionate words that had passed between him and Leofric, their illustrious grandsire, over his father's corpse. He thought then of his own prayer: "Let there be peace between thine and mine!" and looking at their fair and stately youth and noble carriage, he could not but feel that the men of Northumbria and of Mercia had chosen well. The discourse, however, was naturally brief, since thus made general; the visit soon ceased, and the brothers attended Harold to the door, with the courtesy of the times. Then Haco said, with that faint movement of the lips which was his only approach to a smile, —

"Will ye not, noble thegns, give your hands to my kinsman?"

"Surely," said Edwin, the handsomer and more gentle of the two, and who, having a poet's nature, felt a poet's enthusiasm for the gallant deeds even of a rival, — "surely, if the earl will accept the hands of those who trust never to be compelled to draw sword against England's hero."

Harold stretched forth his hand in reply, and that cordial and immemorial pledge of our national friendships was interchanged. •

Gaining the street, Harold said to his nephew, —

"Standing as I do towards the young earls, that appeal of thine had been better omitted."

"Nay," answered Haco; "their cause is already prejudged in their favour. And thou must ally thyself with the heirs of Leofric, and the successors of Siward."

Harold made no answer. There was something in the positive tone of this beardless youth that displeased him; but he remembered that Haco was the son of Sweyn, Godwin's first-born, and that, but for Sweyn's crimes, Haco

might have held the place in England he held himself, and looked to the same august destinies beyond.

In the evening a messenger from the Roman house arrived, with two letters for Harold; one from Hilda, that contained but these words: "Again peril menaces thee, but in the shape of good. Beware! and, above all, of the evil that wears the form of wisdom."

The other letter was from Edith; it was long for the letters of that age, and every sentence spoke a heart wrapped in his.

Reading the last, Hilda's warnings were forgotten. The picture of Edith — the prospect of a power that might at last effect their union, and reward her long devotion — rose before him, to the exclusion of wilder fancies and loftier hopes; and his sleep that night was full of youthful and happy dreams.

The next day the Witan met. The meeting was less stormy than had been expected; for the minds of most men were made up, and so far as Tostig was interested, the facts were too evident and notorious, the witnesses too numerous, to leave any option to the judges. Edward, on whom alone Tostig had relied, had already, with his ordinary vacillation, been swayed towards a right decision, partly by the counsels of Alred and his other prelates, and especially by the representations of Haco, whose grave bearing and profound dissimulation had gained a singular influence over the formal and melancholy king.

By some previous compact or understanding between the opposing parties, there was no attempt, however, to push matters against the offending Tostig to vindictive extremes. There was no suggestion of outlawry, or punishment, beyond the simple deprivation of the earldom he had abused. And in return for this moderation on the one side, the other agreed to support and ratify the new election of the Northumbrians. Morcar was thus formally invested with the vice-kingship of that great realm, while Edwin was confirmed in the earldom of the principal part of Mercia.

On the announcement of these decrees, which were received with loud applause by all the crowd assembled to hear them, Tostig, rallying round him his house-carles, left the town.

He went first to Githa, with whom his wife had sought refuge; and, after a long conference with his mother, he and his haughty countess journeyed to the seacoast, and took ship for Flanders.

CHAPTER IX.

GURTH and Harold were seated in close commune in the earl's chamber, at an hour long after the complin (or second vespers), when Alred entered unexpectedly. The old man's face was unusually grave, and Harold's penetrating eye saw that he was gloomy with some matters of great moment.

"Harold," said the prelate, seating himself, "the hour has come to test thy truth, when thou saidst that thou wert ready to make all sacrifice to thy land, and further, that thou wouldest abide by the counsel of those free from thy passions, and looking on thee only as the instrument of England's weal."

"Speak on, father," said Harold, turning somewhat pale at the solemnity of the address; "I am ready, if the council so desire, to remain a subject, and aid in the choice of a worthier king."

"Thou divinest me ill," answered Alred; "I do not call on thee to lay aside the crown, but to crucify the heart. The decree of the Witan assigns Mercia and Northumbria to the sons of Algar. The old demarcations of the Heptarchy, as thou knowest, are scarce worn out; it is even now less one monarchy than various States retaining their own laws, and inhabited by different races, who under the sub-kings, called earls, acknowledge a supreme head in the Basileus of Britain. Mercia hath its March law and its prince; Northumbria its Dane law and its leader. To elect a king without civil war, these realms, for so they are, must unite with and sanction the Witan elsewhere held. Only thus can the kingdom be firm against foes without and anarchy within; and the more so, from the alliance between the new earls of those great

provinces and the House of Gryffyth, which still lives in Caradoc his son. What if at Edward's death Mercia and Northumbria refuse to sanction thy accession? What if, when all our force were needed against the Norman, the Welch broke loose from their hills, and the Scots from their moors? Malcolm of Cumbria, now King of Scotland, is Tostig's dearest friend, while his people side with Morcar. Verily these are dangers enow for a new king, even if William's sword slept in its sheath."

"Thou speakest the words of wisdom," said Harold; "but I knew beforehand that he who wears a crown must abjure repose."

"Not so; there is one way, and but one, to reconcile all England to thy dominion,—to win to thee not the cold neutrality but the eager zeal of Mercia and Northumbria; to make the first guard thee from the Welch, the last be thy rampart against the Scot. In a word, thou must ally thyself with the blood of these young earls; thou must wed with Aldyth their sister."

The earl sprang to his feet, aghast.

"No! no!" he exclaimed; "not that! any sacrifice but that! rather forfeit the throne than resign the heart that leans on mine! Thou knowest my pledge to Edith, my cousin,—pledge hallowed by the faith of long years. No! no! have mercy,—human mercy; I can wed no other! Any sacrifice but that!"

The good prelate, though not unprepared for this burst, was much moved by its genuine anguish; but, steadfast to his purpose, he resumed:—

"Alas, my son, so say we all in the hour of trial,—any sacrifice but that which duty and Heaven ordain. Resign the throne thou canst not, or thou leavest the land without a ruler, distracted by rival claims and ambitions, an easy prey to the Norman. Resign thy human affections thou canst and must; and the more, O Harold, that even if duty compelled not this new alliance, the old tie is one of sin, which, as king, and as high example in high place to all men, thy conscience within, and the Church without, summon thee to break. How purify the erring lives of the churchmen, if thyself a rebel to

the Church? And if thou hast thought that thy power as king might prevail on the Roman Pontiff to grant dispensation for wedlock within the degrees, and that so thou mightest legally confirm thy now illegal troth, bethink thee well, thou hast a more dread and urgent boon now to ask,—in absolution from thine oath to William. Both prayers, surely, our Roman father will not grant. Wilt thou choose that which absolves from sin, or that which consults but thy carnal affections?"

Harold covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud in his strong agony.

"Aid me, Gurth," cried Airel, "thou, sinless and spotless; thou, in whose voice a brother's love can blend with a Christian's zeal; aid me, Gurth, to melt the stubborn, but to comfort the human, heart."

Then Gurth, with a strong effort over himself, knelt by Harold's side, and in strong simple language, backed the representations of the priest. In truth, all arguments drawn from reason, whether in the state of the land, or the new duties to which Harold was committed, were on the one side, and unanswerable; on the other was but that mighty resistance which love opposes ever to reason. And Harold continued to murmur, while his hands concealed his face,—

"Impossible! — she who trusted, who trusts, who so loves,—she whose whole youth hath been consumed in patient faith in me! Resign her? — and for another! I cannot! I cannot! Take from me the throne! O vain heart of man, that so long desired its own curse! Crown the Atheling; my manhood shall defend his youth. But not this offering! No, no! I will not!"

It were tedious to relate the rest of that prolonged and agitated conference. All that night, till the last stars waned, and the bells of prime were heard from church and convent, did the priest and the brother alternately plead and remonstrate, chide and soothe; and still Harold's heart clung to Edith's, with its bleeding roots. At length they, perhaps not unwisely, left him to himself; and as, whispering low their hopes and their fears of the result of the self-conflict, they went forth from the convent, Haco joined them in the court-

yard, and while his cold mournful eye scanned the faces of priest and brother, he asked them "how they had sped."

Alred shook his head and answered, —

"Man's heart is more strong in the flesh than true to the spirit."

"Pardon me, father," said Haco, "if I suggest that your most eloquent and persuasive ally in this were Edith herself. Start not so incredulously; it is because she loves the earl more than her own life, that—once show her that the earl's safety, greatness, honour, duty, lie in release from his troth to her—that nought save his erring love resists your counsels and his country's claims—and Edith's voice will have more power than yours."

The virtuous prelate, more acquainted with man's selfishness than woman's devotion, only replied by an impatient gesture. But Gurth, lately wedded to a woman worthy of him, said gravely, —

"Haco speaks well, my father; and methinks it is due to both that Edith should not, unconsulted, be abandoned by him for whom she has abjured all others; to whom she has been as devoted in heart as if sworn wife already. Leave we awhile my brother, never the slave of passion, and with whom England must at last prevail over all selfish thought; and ride we at once to tell to Edith what we have told to him; or rather—woman can best in such a case speak to woman—let us tell all to our Lady—Edward's wife, Harold's sister, and Edith's holy godmother—and abide by her counsel. On the third day we shall return."

"Go we so charged, noble Gurth," said Haco, observing the prelate's reluctant countenance, "and leave we our reverend father to watch over the earl's sharp struggle."

"Thou speakest well, my son," said the prelate, "and thy mission suits the young and the layman better than the old and the priest."

"Let us go, Haco," said Gurth, briefly. "Deep, sore, and lasting is the wound I inflict on the brother of my love, and my own heart bleeds in his; but he himself hath taught me to hold England as a Roman held Rome."

CHAPTER X.

It is the nature of that happiness which we derive from our affections to be calm; its immense influence upon our outward life is not known till it is troubled or withdrawn. By placing his heart at peace, man leaves vent to his energies and passions, and permits their current to flow towards the aims and objects which interest labour or arouse ambition. Thus absorbed in the occupation without, he is lulled into a certain forgetfulness of the value of that internal repose which gives health and vigour to the faculties he employs abroad. But once mar this scarce felt, almost invisible harmony, and the discord extends to the remotest chords of our active being. Say to the busiest man whom thou seest in mart, camp, or senate, who seems to thee all intent upon his worldly schemes, “Thy home is reft from thee; thy household gods are shattered; that sweet noiseless content in the regular mechanism of the springs, which set the large wheels of thy soul into movement, is thine nevermore!” — and straightway all exertion seems robbed of its object, all aim of its alluring charm. “Othello’s occupation is gone!” With a start, that man will awaken from the sunlit visions of noon tide ambition, and exclaim in his desolate anguish, “What are all the rewards to my labour, now thou hast robbed me of repose? How little are all the gains wrung from strife, in a world of rivals and foes, compared to the smile whose sweetness I knew not till it was lost; and the sense of security from mortal ill which I took from the trust and sympathy of love?”

Thus was it with Harold in that bitter and terrible crisis of his fate. This rare and spiritual love, which had existed on hope, which had never known fruition, had become the subtlest, the most exquisite part of his being; this love, to the full and holy possession of which every step in his career seemed to advance him — was it now to be evermore reft from

his heart, his existence, at the very moment when he had deemed himself most secure of its rewards, when he most needed its consolations? Hitherto, in that love he had lived in the future; he had silenced the voice of the turbulent human passion by the whisper of the patient angel, "A little while yet, and thy bride sits beside thy throne!" Now what was that future? how joyless! how desolate! The splendour vanished from Ambition, the glow from the face of Fame, the sense of Duty remained alone to counteract the pleadings of Affection; but Duty, no longer dressed in all the gorgeous colourings it took before from glory and power,—Duty stern and harsh and terrible, as the iron frown of a Grecian Destiny.

And thus, front to front with that Duty, he sat alone one evening, while his lips murmured, "Oh, fatal voyage! oh, lying truth in the hell-born prophecy! this, then, this was the wife my league with the Norman was to win to my arms!" In the streets below were heard the tramp of busy feet hurrying homeward, and the confused uproar of joyous wassail from the various resorts of entertainment crowded by careless revellers. And the tread of steps mounted the stairs without his door, and there paused; and there was the murmur of two voices without,—one the clear voice of Gurth, one softer and more troubled. The earl lifted his head from his bosom, and his heart beat quick at the faint and scarce heard sound of that last voice. The door opened gently, gently; a form entered, and halted on the shadow of the threshold; the door closed again by a hand from without. The earl rose to his feet, tremulously, and the next moment Edith was at his knees; her hood thrown back, her face upturned to his, bright with unfaded beauty, serene with the grandeur of self-martyrdom.

"O Harold!" she exclaimed, "dost thou remember that in the old time I said, 'Edith had loved thee less, if thou hadst not loved England more than Edith'? Recall, recall those words! And deemest thou now that I, who have gazed for years into thy clear soul, and learned there to sun my woman's heart in the light of all glories native to noblest man,—deem-

est thou, O Harold, that I am weaker now than then, when I scarce knew what England and glory were?"

"Edith, Edith, what wouldest thou say? What knowest thou? Who hath told thee? What led thee hither, to take part against thyself?"

"It matters not who told me; I know all. What led me? Mine own soul, and mine own love!" Springing to her feet, and clasping his hand in both hers, while she looked into his face, she resumed: "I do not say to thee, 'Grieve not to part;' for I know too well thy faith, thy tenderness, thy heart, so grand and so soft. But I do say, 'Soar above thy grief, and be more than man for the sake of men!' Yes, Harold, for this last time I behold thee. I clasp thy hand, I lean on thy heart, I hear its beating, and I shall go hence without a tear."

"It cannot, it shall not be!" exclaimed Harold, passionately. "Thou deceivest thyself in the divine passion of the hour; thou canst not foresee the utterness of the desolation to which thou wouldest doom thy life. We were betrothed to each other by ties strong as those of the Church,—over the grave of the dead, under the vault of heaven, in the form of ancestral faith! The bond cannot be broken. If England demands me, let England take me with the ties it were unholy, even for her sake, to rend!"

"Alas, alas!" faltered Edith, while the flush on her cheek sank into mournful paleness. "It is not as thou sayest. So has thy love sheltered me from the world, so utter was my youth's ignorance or my heart's oblivion of the stern laws of man, that when it pleased thee that we should love each other, I could not believe that that love was sin; and that it was sin hitherto I will not think,—*now* it hath become one."

"No, no!" cried Harold; all the eloquence on which thousands had hung, thrilled and spell-bound, deserting him in that hour of need, and leaving to him only broken exclamations,—fragments, in each of which his heart itself seemed shivered; "no, no! not sin!—sin only to forsake thee. Hush! hush! This is a dream,—wait till we wake! True heart! noble soul! I will not part from thee!"

"But I from thee! And rather than thou shouldst be lost for my sake — the sake of woman — to honour and conscience, and all for which thy sublime life sprang from the hands of Nature, if not the cloister, may I find the grave! Harold, to the last let me be worthy of thee; and feel, at least, that if not thy wife — that bright, that blessed fate not mine! — still, remembering Edith, just men may say, 'She would not have dishonoured the hearth of Harold!'"

"Dost thou know," said the earl, striving to speak calmly, "dost thou know that it is not only to resign thee that they demand, — that it is to resign thee, and for another?"

"I know it," said Edith; and two burning tears, despite her strong and preternatural self-exaltation, swelled from the dark fringe, and rolled slowly down the colourless cheek, as she added, with proud voice, "I know it; but that other is not Aldyth, it is England! In her, in Aldyth, behold the dear cause of thy native land; with her enweave the love which thy native land should command. So thinking, thou art reconciled, and I consoled. It is not for woman that thou desertest Edith."

"Hear, and take from those lips the strength and the valour that belong to the name of Hero!" said a deep and clear voice behind; and Gurth — who, whether distrusting the result of an interview so prolonged, or tenderly desirous to terminate its pain, had entered unobserved — approached, and wound his arm caressingly round his brother. "O Harold!" he said, "dear to me as the drops in my heart is my young bride, newly wed; but if for one tithe of the claims that now call thee to the torture and trial, — yea, if but for one hour of good service to freedom and law, — I would consent without a groan to behold her no more. And if men asked me how I could so conquer man's affections, I would point to thee, and say, 'So Harold taught my youth by his lessons, and my manhood by his life.' Before thee, visible, stand Happiness and Love, but with them, Shame; before thee, invisible, stands Woe, but with Woe are England and eternal Glory! Choose between them."

"He hath chosen," said Edith, as Harold turned to the wall,

and leaned against it, hiding 'his face; then, approaching softly, she knelt, lifted to her lips the hem of his robe, and kissed it with devout passion.

Harold turned suddenly, and opened his arms. Edith resisted not that mute appeal; she rose, and fell on his breast, sobbing.

Wild and speechless was that last embrace. The moon, which had witnessed their union by the heathen grave, now rose above the tower of the Christian church, and looked wan and cold upon their parting.

Solemn and clear paused the orb,—a cloud passed over the disk,—and Edith was gone. The cloud rolled away, and again the moon shone forth; and where had knelt the fair form and looked the last look of Edith, stood the motionless image, and gazed the solemn eye, of the dark son of Sweyn. But Harold leaned on the breast of Gurth, and saw not who had supplanted the soft and loving Fylgia of his life,—saw nought in the universe but the blank of desolation!

BOOK XI.

THE NORMAN SCHEMER, AND THE NORWEGIAN SEA-KING.

CHAPTER I.

It was the eve of the 5th of January,—the eve of the day announced to King Edward as that of his deliverance from earth; and whether or not the prediction had wrought its own fulfilment on the fragile frame and susceptible nerves of the king, the last of the line of Cerdic was fast passing into the solemn shades of eternity.

Without the walls of the palace, through the whole city of London, the excitement was indescribable. All the river before the palace was crowded with boats; all the broad space on the Isle of Thorney itself thronged with anxious groups. But a few days before, the new-built Abbey had been solemnly consecrated; with the completion of that holy edifice, Edward's life itself seemed done. Like the kings of Egypt, he had built his tomb.

Within the palace, if possible, still greater was the agitation, more dread the suspense. Lobbies, halls, corridors, stairs, ante-rooms, were filled with churchmen and thegns. Nor was it alone for news of the king's state that their brows were so knit, that their breath came and went so short. It is not when a great chief is dying that men compose their minds to deplore a loss. That comes long after, when the worm is at its work, and comparison between the dead and the living often rights the one to wrong the other. But while the breath is struggling, and the eye glazing, life, busy in the bystanders, murmurs, “Who shall be the heir?” And, in this instance,

never had suspense been so keenly wrought up into hope and terror. For the news of Duke William's designs had now spread far and near; and awful was the doubt, whether the abhorred Norman should receive his sole sanction to so arrogant a claim from the parting assent of Edward. Although, as we have seen, the crown was not absolutely within the bequests of a dying king but at the will of the Witan, still, in circumstances so unparalleled, — the utter failure of all natural heirs, save a boy feeble in mind as body, and half foreign by birth and rearing; the love borne by Edward to the Church; and the sentiments, half of pity half of reverence, with which he was regarded throughout the land,— his dying word would go far to influence the council and select the successor. Some whispering to each other, with pale lips, all the dire predictions then current in men's mouths and breasts, some in moody silence, all lifted eager eyes, as, from time to time, a gloomy Benedictine passed in the direction to or fro the king's chamber.

In that chamber, traversing the past of eight centuries, enter we with hushed and noiseless feet,— a room known to us in many a later scene and legend of England's troubled history as "THE PAINTED CHAMBER," long called "THE CONFESSOR'S." At the farthest end of that long and lofty space, raised upon a regal platform, and roofed with regal canopy, was the bed of death.

At the foot stood Harold; on one side knelt Edith, the king's lady; at the other Alred; while Stigand stood near — the holy rood in his hand — and the abbot of the new monastery of Westminster by Stigand's side; and all the greatest thegns, including Morcar and Edwin, Gurth and Leofwine, all the more illustrious prelates and abbots, stood also on the dais.

In the lower end of the hall, the king's physician was warming a cordial over the brazier, and some of the subordinate officers of the household were standing in the niches of the deep-set windows; and they — not great eno' for other emotions than those of human love for their kindly lord — *they wept.*

The king, who had already undergone the last holy offices of the Church, was lying quite quiet, his eyes half closed, breathing low but regularly. He had been speechless the two preceding days; on this he had uttered a few words, which showed returning consciousness. His hand, reclined on the coverlid, was clasped in his wife's, who was praying fervently. Something in the touch of her hand, or the sound of her murmur, stirred the king from the growing lethargy, and his eyes opening, fixed on the kneeling lady.

"Ah?" said he, faintly, "ever good, ever meek! Think not I did not love thee; hearts will be read yonder; we shall have our guerdon."

The lady looked up through her streaming tears. Edward released his hand, and laid it on her head as in benediction. Then motioning to the abbot of Westminster, he drew from his finger the ring which the palmers had brought to him,¹ and murmured scarce audibly,—

"Be this kept in the House of St. Peter in memory of me!"

"He is alive now to us; speak—" whispered more than one thegn, one abbot, to Alred and to Stigand. And Stigand, as the harder and more worldly man of the two, moved up, and bending over the pillow, between Alred and the king, said,—

"O royal son, about to win the crown to which that of earth is but an idiot's wreath of withered leaves, not yet may thy soul forsake us. Whom commendest thou to us as shepherd to thy bereaven flock; whom shall we admonish to tread in those traces thy footsteps leave below?"

The king made a slight gesture of impatience; and the queen, forgetful of all but her womanly sorrow, raised her eye and finger in reproof that the dying was thus disturbed. But the stake was too weighty, the suspense too keen, for that reverent delicacy in those around; and the thegns pressed on each other, and a murmur rose, which murmured the name of Harold.

"Bethink thee, my son," said Alred, in a tender voice,

¹ Brompton Chronicle.

tremulous with emotion; “the young Atheling is too much an infant yet for these anxious times.”

Edward signed his head in assent.

“Then,” said the Norman bishop of London, who till that moment had stood in the rear, almost forgotten amongst the crowd of Saxon prelates, but who himself had been all eyes and ears,—“then,” said Bishop William, advancing, “if thine own royal line so fail, who so near to thy love, who so worthy to succeed, as William thy cousin, the Count of the Normans?”

Dark was the scowl on the brow of every thegn, and a muttered “No, no: never the Norman!” was heard distinctly. Harold’s face flushed, and his hand was on the hilt of his ateghar; but no other sign gave he of his interest in the question.

The king lay for some moments silent, but evidently striving to re-collect his thoughts. Meanwhile the two arch-prelates bent over him,—Stigand eagerly, Alred fondly.

Then raising himself on one arm, while with the other he pointed to Harold at the foot of the bed, the king said,—

“Your hearts, I see, are with Harold the Earl: so be it.”

At those words he fell back on his pillow; a loud shriek burst from his wife’s lips; all crowded around; he lay as the dead.

At the cry, and the indescribable movement of the throng, the physician came quick from the lower part of the hall. He made his way abruptly to the bedside, and said chidingly, “Air,—give him air.” The throng parted, the leech moistened the king’s pale lips with the cordial, but no breath seemed to come forth, no pulse seemed to beat; and while the two prelates knelt before the human body and by the blessed rood, the rest descended the dais, and hastened to depart. Harold only remained; but he had passed from the foot to the head of the bed.

The crowd had gained the centre of the hall, when a sound that startled them as if it had come from the grave, chained every footstep,—the sound of the king’s voice, loud, terribly distinct, and full, as with the vigour of youth restored. All turned their eyes, appalled; all stood spell-bound.

There sat the king upright on the bed, his face seen above the kneeling prelates, and his eyes bright and shining down the Hall.

"Yea," he said deliberately, "yea, as this shall be a real vision or a false illusion, grant me, Almighty One, the power of speech to tell it."

He paused a moment, and thus resumed:—

"It was on the banks of the frozen Seine, this day thirty-and-one winters ago, that two holy monks, to whom the gift of prophecy was vouchsafed, told me of direful woes that should fall on England; 'For God,' said they, 'after thy death, has delivered England into the hand of the enemy, and fiends shall wander over the land.' Then I asked in my sorrow, 'Can nought avert the doom; and may not my people free themselves by repentance, like the Ninevites of old?' And the Prophets answered, 'Nay, nor shall the calamity cease, and the curse be completed, till a green tree be sundered in twain, and the part cut off be carried away; yet move, of itself, to the ancient trunk, unite to the stem, bud out with the blossom, and stretch forth its fruit.' So said the monks, and even now, ere I spoke, I saw them again, there, standing mute, and with the paleness of dead men, by the side of my bed!"

These words were said so calmly, and as it were so rationally, that their import became doubly awful from the cold precision of the tone. A shudder passed through the assembly, and each man shrunk from the king's eye, which seemed to each man to dwell on himself. Suddenly that eye altered in its cold beam; suddenly the voice changed its deliberate accent; the gray hairs seemed to bristle erect, the whole face to work with horror; the arms stretched forth, the form writhed on the couch; distorted fragments from the older Testament rushed from the lips: "*Sanguelac! Sanguelac!* — the Lake of Blood," shrieked forth the dying king, "the Lord hath bent his bow,—the Lord hath bared his sword. He comes down as a warrior to war, and his wrath is in the steel and the flame. He boweth the mountains, and comes down, and darkness is under his feet!"

As if revived but for these tremendous denunciations, while the last word left his lips the frame collapsed, the eyes set, and the king fell a corpse in the arms of Harold.

But one smile of the sceptic or the world-man was seen on the paling lips of those present: that smile was not on the lips of warriors and men of mail. It distorted the sharpened features of Stigand, the world-man and the miser, as, passing down, and amidst the group, he said, "Tremble ye at the dreams of a sick old man?"¹

CHAPTER II.

THE time of year customary for the National Assembly; the recent consecration of Westminster, for which Edward had convened all his chief spiritual lords; the anxiety felt for the infirm state of the king, and the interest as to the impending succession,—all concurred to permit the instantaneous meeting of a Witan worthy, from rank and numbers, to meet the emergency of the time, and proceed to the most momentous election ever yet known in England. The thegns and prelates met in haste. Harold's marriage with Aldyth, which had taken place but a few weeks before, had united all parties with his own; not a claim counter to the great earl's was advanced; the choice was unanimous. The necessity of terminating at such a crisis all suspense throughout the kingdom, and extinguishing the danger of all counter intrigues, forbade to men thus united any delay in solemnizing their decision; and the august obsequies of Edward were followed on the same day by the coronation of Harold.

It was in the body of the mighty Abbey Church, not indeed as we see it now, after successive restorations and remodelings, but simple in its long rows of Saxon arch and massive column, blending the first Teuton with the last Roman ma-

¹ See Note P.

sonries, that the crowd of the Saxon freemen assembled to honour the monarch of their choice,— first Saxon king, since England had been one monarchy, selected not from the single House of Cerdic; first Saxon king not led to the throne by the pale shades of fabled ancestors tracing their descent from the Father-God of the Teuton, but by the spirits that never know a grave, the arch-eternal givers of crowns, and founders of dynasties,— Valour and Fame.

Alred and Stigand, the two great prelates of the realm, had conducted Harold to the church,¹ and up the aisle to the altar, followed by the chiefs of the Witan in their long robes; and the clergy with their abbots and bishops sung the anthems, “Fermetur manus tua,” and “Gloria Patri.”

And now the music ceased; Harold prostrated himself before the altar, and the sacred melody burst forth with the great hymn, “Te Deum.”

As it ceased, prelate and thegn raised their chief from the floor, and in imitation of the old custom of Teuton and Northman — when the lord of their armaments was borne on shoulder and shield — Harold mounted a platform, and rose in full view of the crowd.

“Thus,” said the arch-prelate, “we choose Harold son of Godwin for lord and for king.” And the thegns drew round, and placed hand on Harold’s knee, and cried aloud, “We choose thee, O Harold, for lord and for king.” And row by row, line by line, all the multitude shouted forth, “We choose thee, O Harold, for lord and king.” So there he stood with

¹ It seems by the coronation service of Ethelred II., still extant, that two bishops officiated in the crowning of the king; and hence, perhaps, the discrepancy in the chroniclers, some contending that Harold was crowned by Alred, others, by Stigand. It is noticeable, however, that it is the apologists of the Normans who assign that office to Stigand, who was in disgrace with the Pope, and deemed no lawful bishop. Thus in the Bayeux tapestry the label “Stigand” is significantly affixed to the officiating prelate, as if to convey insinuation that Harold was not lawfully crowned. Florence, by far the best authority, says distinctly that Harold was crowned by Alred. The ceremonial of the coronation described in the text is for the most part given on the authority of the “Cotton Manuscript” quoted by Sharon Turner, vol. iii. p. 151.

his calm brow, facing all, Monarch of England, and Basileus of Britain.

Now unheeded amidst the throng, and leaning against a column in the arches of the aisle, was a woman with her veil round her face; and she lifted the veil for a moment to gaze on that lofty brow, and the tears were streaming fast down her cheek, but her face was not sad.

"Let the vulgar not see, to pity or scorn thee, daughter of kings as great as he who abandons and forsakes thee!" murmured a voice in her ear; and the form of Hilda, needing no support from column or wall, rose erect by the side of Edith. Edith bowed her head and lowered the veil, as the king descended the platform and stood again by the altar, while clear through the hushed assembly rang the words of his triple promise to his people:—

"Peace to his Church and the Christian flock;

"Interdict of rapacity and injustice;

"Equity and mercy in his judgments, as God the gracious and just might show mercy to him."

And deep from the hearts of thousands came the low "Amen."

Then after a short prayer, which each prelate repeated, the crowd saw afar the glitter of the crown held over the head of the king. The voice of the consecrator was heard, low till it came to the words, "So potently and royally may he rule, against all visible and invisible foes, that the royal throne of the Angles and Saxons may not desert his sceptre."

As the prayer ceased, came the symbolical rite of anointment. Then pealed the sonorous organ,¹ and solemn along the aisles rose the anthem that closed with the chorus, which the voice of the multitude swelled, "May the king live forever!" Then the crown that had gleamed in the trembling hand of the prelate rested firm in its splendour on the front of the king; and the sceptre of rule, and the rod of justice, "to soothe the pious and terrify the bad," were placed in the royal hands. And the prayer and the blessings were renewed,—till the close, "Bless, Lord, the courage of this

¹ Introduced into our churches in the ninth century.

Prince, and prosper the works of his hand. With his horn, as the horn of the rhinoceros, may he blow the waters to the extremities of the earth; and may He who has ascended to the skies be his aid forever!"

Then Hilda stretched forth her hand to lead Edith from the place. But Edith shook her head and murmured,—

"But once again, but once!" and with involuntary step moved on.

Suddenly, close where she paused, the crowd parted, and down the narrow lane so formed amidst the wedged and breathless crowd came the august procession. Prelate and thegn swept on from the Church to the palace; and alone, with firm and measured step, the diadem on his brow, the sceptre in his hand, came the king. Edith checked the rushing impulse at her heart, but she bent forward, with veil half drawn aside, and so gazed on that face and form of more than royal majesty fondly, proudly. The king swept on and saw her not; love lived no more for him.

CHAPTER III.

THE boat shot over the royal Thames. Borne along the waters, the shouts and the hymns of swarming thousands from the land shook like a blast the gelid air of the Wolf-month. All space seemed filled and noisy with the name of Harold the King. Fast rowed the rowers, on shot the boat; and Hilda's face, stern and ominous, turned to the still towers of the palace, gleaming wide and white in the wintry sun. Suddenly Edith lifted her hand from her bosom, and said passionately,—

"Oh! mother of my mother, I cannot live again in the house where the very walls speak to me of him; all things chain my soul to the earth; and my soul should be in heaven, that its prayers may be heard by the heedful angels. The

day that the holy Lady of England predicted hath come to pass, and the silver cord is loosed at last. Ah why, why did I not believe her then? Why did I then reject the cloister? Yet no, I will not repent; at least I have been loved! But now I will go to the nunnery of Waltham, and kneel at the altars *he* hath hallowed to the mone and the monechyn."

"Edith," said the Vala, "thou wilt not bury thy life yet young in the living grave! And, despite all that now severs you,—yea, despite Harold's new and loveless ties,—still clearer than ever it is written in the heavens that a day *shall* come, in which you are to be evermore united. Many of the shapes I have seen, many of the sounds I have heard, in the trance and the dream, fade in the troubled memory of waking life; but never yet hath grown doubtful or dim the prophecy that the truth pledged by the grave shall be fulfilled."

"Oh, tempt not! Oh, delude not!" cried Edith, while the blood rushed over her brow. "Thou knowest this cannot be. Another's! he is another's! and in the words thou hast uttered there is deadly sin."

"There is no sin in the resolves of a fate that rules us in spite of ourselves. Tarry only till the year bring round the birthday of Harold; for my sayings shall be ripe with the grape, and when the feet of the vineherd are red in the Month of the Vine,¹ the Nornas shall knit ye together again!"

Edith clasped her hands mutely, and looked hard into the face of Hilda,—looked and shuddered, she knew not why.

The boat landed on the eastern shore of the river, beyond the walls of the city, and then Edith bent her way to the holy walls of Waltham. The frost was sharp in the glitter of the unwarmed sun; upon leafless boughs hung the barbed ice-gems; and the crown was on the brow of Harold! And at night, within the walls of the convent, Edith heard the hymns of the kneeling monks; and the blasts howled, and the storm arose, and the voices of destroying hurricanes were blent with the swell of the choral hymns.

¹ The Wyn-month: October.

CHAPTER IV.

Tostig sat in the halls of Bruges, and with him sat Judith, his haughty wife. The earl and his countess were playing at chess (or the game resembling it, which amused the idlesse of that age), and the countess had put her lord's game into mortal disorder, when Tostig swept his hand over the board, and the pieces rolled on the floor.

"That is one way to prevent defeat," said Judith, with a half smile and half frown.

"It is the way of the bold and the wise, wife mine," answered Tostig, rising; "let all be destruction where thou thyself canst win not! Peace to these trifles! I cannot keep my mind to the mock fight; it flies to the real. Our last news sours the taste of the wine, and steals the sleep from my couch. It says that Edward cannot live through the winter, and that all men bruit abroad there can be no king save Harold, my brother."

"And will thy brother as king give to thee again thy domain as earl?"

"He must!" answered Tostig, "and, despite all our breaches, with soft message he will. For Harold has the heart of the Saxon, to which the sons of one father are dear; and Githa, my mother, when we first fled, controlled the voice of my revenge, and bade me wait patient, and hope yet."

Scarce had these words fallen from Tostig's lips, when the chief of his Danish house-carles came in, and announced the arrival of a bode from England.

"His news? his news?" cried the earl; "with his own lips let him speak his news."

The house-carle withdrew but to usher in the messenger, an Anglo-Dane.

"The weight on thy brow shows the load on thy heart," cried Tostig. "Speak, and be brief."

"Edward is dead."

"Ha! and who reigns?"

"Thy brother is chosen and crowned."

The face of the earl grew red and pale in a breath, and successive emotions of envy and old rivalship, humbled pride and fierce discontent, passed across his turbulent heart. But these died away as the predominant thought of self-interest, and somewhat of that admiration for success which often seems like magnanimity in grasping minds, and something too of haughty exultation, that he stood a king's brother in the halls of his exile, came to chase away the more hostile and menacing feelings. Then Judith approached with joy on her brow, and said, —

"We shall no more eat the bread of dependence even at the hand of a father; and since Harold hath no dame to proclaim to the Church, and to place on the dais, thy wife, O my Tostig, will have state in fair England little less than her sister in Rouen."

"Methinks so will it be," said Tostig. "How now, nun-
cius? Why lookest thou so grim, and why shakest thou thy head?"

"Small chance for thy dame to keep state in the halls of the king; small hope for thyself to win back thy broad earldom. But a few weeks ere thy brother won the crown, he won also a bride in the house of thy spoiler and foe. Aldyth, the sister of Edwin and Morcar, is Lady of England; and that union shuts thee out from Northumbria forever."

At these words, as if stricken by some deadly and inexpressible insult, the earl recoiled, and stood a moment mute with rage and amaze. His singular beauty became distorted into the lineaments of a fiend. He stamped with his foot, as he thundered a terrible curse. Then haughtily waving his hand to the bode, in sign of dismissal, he strode to and fro the room in gloomy perturbation.

Judith, like her sister Matilda, a woman fierce and vindictive, continued, by that sharp venom that lies in the tongue of the sex, to incite still more the intense resentment of her lord. Perhaps some female jealousies of Aldyth might con-

tribute to increase her own indignation. But without such frivolous addition to anger, there was cause eno' in this marriage thoroughly to complete the alienation between the king and his brother. It was impossible that one so revengeful as Tostig should not cherish the deepest animosity, not only against the people that had rejected, but the new earl that had succeeded him. In wedding the sister of this fortunate rival and despoiler, Harold could not, therefore, but gall him in his most sensitive sores of soul. The king thus formally approved and sanctioned his ejection, solemnly took part with his foe, robbed him of all legal chance of recovering his dominions, and, in the words of the bode, "shut him out from Northumbria forever." Nor was this even all. Grant his return to England; grant a reconciliation with Harold; still those abhorred and more fortunate enemies, necessarily made now the most intimate part of the king's family, must be most in his confidence, would curb and chafe and encounter Tostig in every scheme for his personal aggrandizement. His foes, in a word, were in the camp of his brother.

While gnashing his teeth with a wrath the more deadly because he saw not yet his way to retribution, Judith, pursuing the separate thread of her own cogitations, said, —

"And if my sister's lord, the Count of the Normans, had, as rightly he ought to have, succeeded his cousin the monk-king, then I should have a sister on the throne, and thou in her husband a brother more tender than Harold, — one who supports his barons with sword and mail, and gives the vileins rebelling against them but the brand and the cord."

"Ho!" cried Tostig, stopping suddenly in his disordered strides, "kiss me, wife, for those words! They have helped thee to power, and lit me to revenge. If thou wouldest send love to thy sister, take graphium and parchment, and write fast as a scribe. Ere the sun is an hour older, I am on my road to Count William."

CHAPTER V.

THE duke of the Normans was in the forest, or park-land, of Rouvray, and his quens and his knights stood around him, expecting some new proof of his strength and his skill with the bow. For the duke was trying some arrows, a weapon he was ever employed in seeking to improve; sometimes shortening, sometimes lengthening, the shaft; and suiting the wing of the feather, and the weight of the point, to the nicest refinement in the law of mechanics. Gay and debonair, in the brisk fresh air of the frosty winter, the great count jested and laughed as the squires fastened a live bird by the string to a stake in the distant sward; and, "*Pardex*," said Duke William, "Conan of Bretagne and Philip of France leave us now so unkindly in peace, that I trow we shall never again have larger butt for our arrows than the breast of yon poor plumed trembler."

As the duke spoke and laughed, all the sere boughs behind him rattled and crunched, and a horse at full speed came rushing over the hard rime of the sward. The duke's smile vanished in the frown of his pride. "Bold rider and graceless," quoth he, "who thus comes in the presence of counts and princes?"

Right up to Duke William spurred the rider, and then leaped from his steed,—vest and mantle, yet more rich than the duke's, all tattered and soiled. No knee bent the rider, no cap did he doff; but seizing the startled Norman with the gripe of a hand as strong as his own, he led him aside from the courtiers, and said,—

"Thou knowest me, William?—though not thus alone should I come to thy court, if I did not bring thee a crown."

"Welcome, brave Tostig!" said the duke, marvelling. "What meanest thou? Nought but good, by thy words and thy smile."

"Edward sleeps with the dead! — and Harold is King of all England!"

"King! England! King!" faltered William, stammering in his agitation. "Edward dead! — Saints rest him! England then is *mine!* King! — I am the King! Harold hath sworn it; my quens and prelates heard him; the bones of the saints attest the oath!"

"Somewhat of this have I vaguely learned from our *beau-père* Count Baldwin; more will I learn at thy leisure; but take, meanwhile, my word as *Miles* and *Saxon*, — never, while there is breath on his lips, or one beat in his heart, will my brother, Lord Harold, give an inch of English land to the Norman."

William turned pale and faint with emotion, and leaned for support against a leafless oak.

Busy were the rumours, and anxious the watch, of the quens and knights, as their prince stood long in the distant glade, conferring with the rider, whom one or two of them had recognized as Tostig, the spouse of Matilda's sister.

At length, side by side, still talking earnestly, they regained the group; and William, summoning the Lord of Tancarville, bade him conduct Tostig to Rouen, the towers of which rose through the forest trees. "Rest and refresh thee, noble kinsman," said the duke; "see and talk with Matilda. I will join thee anon."

The earl remounted his steed, and saluting the company with a wild and hasty grace, soon vanished amidst the groves.

Then William, seating himself on the sward, mechanically unstrung his bow, sighing oft, and oft frowning; and without vouchsafing other word to his lords than "No further sport to-day!" rose slowly, and went alone through the thickest parts of the forest. But his faithful Fitzosborne marked his gloom, and fondly followed him. The duke arrived at the borders of the Seine, where his galley waited him. He entered, sat down on the bench, and took no notice of Fitzosborne, who quietly stepped in after his lord, and placed himself on another bench.

The little voyage to Rouen was performed in silence; and as soon as he had gained his palace, without seeking either Tostig or Matilda, the duke turned into the vast hall, in which he was wont to hold council with his barons, and walked to and fro, “often,” say the chroniclers, “changing posture and attitude, and oft loosening and tightening, and drawing into knots, the strings of his mantle.”

Fitzosborne, meanwhile, had sought the ex-earl, who was closeted with Matilda; and now returning, he went boldly up to the duke, whom no one else dared approach, and said,—

“Why, my liege, seek to conceal what is already known,—what ere the eve will be in the mouths of all? You are troubled that Edward is dead, and that Harold, violating his oath, has seized the English realm.”

“Truly,” said the duke, mildly, and with the tone of a meek man much injured, “my dear cousin’s death, and the wrongs I have received from Harold, touch me nearly.”

Then said Fitzosborne, with that philosophy, half grave as became the Scandinavian, half gay as became the Frank: “No man should grieve for what he can help,—still less for what he cannot help. For Edward’s death, I trow, remedy there is none; but for Harold’s treason, yea! Have you not a noble host of knights and warriors? What want you to destroy the Saxon and seize his realm,—what but a bold heart? A great deed once well begun, is half done. Begin, Count of the Normans, and we will complete the rest.”

Starting from his sorely tasked dissimulation, for all William needed, and all of which he doubted, was the aid of his haughty barons, the duke raised his head, and his eyes shone out.

“Ha, sayest thou so? then, by the Splendour of God, we will do this deed. Haste thou! rouse hearts, nerve hands! promise, menace, win! Broad are the lands of England, and generous a conqueror’s hand. Go and prepare all my faithful lords for a council, nobler than ever yet stirred the hearts and strung the hands of the sons of Rou.”

CHAPTER VI.

BRIEF was the sojourn of Tostig at the court of Rouen; speedily made the contract between the grasping duke and the revengeful traitor. All that had been promised to Harold was now pledged to Tostig,—if the last would assist the Norman to the English throne.

At heart, however, Tostig was ill satisfied. His chance conversations with the principal barons, who seemed to look upon the conquest of England as the dream of a madman, showed him how doubtful it was that William could induce his quens to a service, to which the tenure of their fiefs did not appear to compel them; and at all events, Tostig prognosticated delays that little suited his fiery impatience. He accepted the offer of some two or three ships, which William put at his disposal, under pretence to reconnoitre the Northumbrian coasts, and there attempt a rising in his own favour. But his discontent was increased by the smallness of the aid afforded him; for William, ever suspicious, distrusted both his faith and his power. Tostig, with all his vices, was a poor dissimulator, and his sullen spirit betrayed itself when he took leave of his host.

"Chance what may," said the fierce Saxon, "no stranger shall seize the English crown without my aid. I offer it first to thee. But thou must come to take it in time, or—"

"Or what?" asked the duke, gnawing his lip.

"Or the Father race of Rou will be before thee! My horse paws without. Farewell to thee, Norman; sharpen thy swords, hew out thy vessels, and goad thy slow barons."

Scarce had Tostig departed, ere William began to repent that he had so let him depart; but seeking counsel of Lanfranc, that wise minister reassured him.

"Fear no rival, son and lord," said he. "The bones of the dead are on thy side, and little thou knowest, as yet, how

mighty their fleshless arms! All Tostig can do is to distract the forces of Harold. Leave him to work out his worst; nor then be in haste. Much hath yet to be done,—cloud must gather and fire must form, ere the bolt can be launched. Send to Harold mildly, and gently remind him of oath and of relics, of treaty and pledge. Put right on thy side, and then”—

“Ah, what then?”

“Rome shall curse the forsaken. Rome shall hallow thy banner; this be no strife of force against force, but a war of religion; and thou shalt have on thy side the conscience of man and the arm of the Church.”

Meanwhile, Tostig embarked at Harfleur; but instead of sailing to the northern coasts of England, he made for one of the Flemish ports: and there, under various pretences, new manned the Norman vessels with Flemings, Fins, and Northmen. His meditations during his voyage had decided him not to trust to William; and he now bent his course, with fair wind and favouring weather, to the shores of his maternal uncle, King Sweyn of Denmark.

In truth, to all probable calculation, his change of purpose was politic. The fleets of England were numerous, and her seamen renowned. The Normans had neither experience nor fame in naval fights; their navy itself was scarcely formed. Thus even William's landing in England was an enterprise arduous and dubious. Moreover, even granting the amplest success, would not this Norman Prince, so profound and ambitious, be a more troublesome lord to Earl Tostig than his own uncle Sweyn?

So, forgetful of the compact at Rouen, no sooner had the Saxon lord come in presence of the King of the Danes than he urged on his kinsman the glory of winning again the sceptre of Canute.

A brave, but a cautious and wily veteran was King Sweyn; and a few days before Tostig arrived, he had received letters from his sister Githa, who, true to Godwin's command, had held all that Harold did and counselled, as between himself and his brother, wise and just. These letters had placed the

Dane on his guard, and shown him the true state of affairs in England. So King Sweyn, smiling, thus answered his nephew Tostig: —

“A great man was Canute, a small man am I: scarce can I keep my Danish dominion from the gripe of the Norwegian, while Canute took Norway without slash and blow;¹ but great as he was, England cost him hard fighting to win, and sore peril to keep. Wherefore, best for the small man to rule by the light of his own little sense, nor venture to count on the luck of great Canute,—for luck but goes with the great.”

“Thine answer,” said Tostig, with a bitter sneer, “is not what I expected from an uncle and warrior. But other chiefs may be found less afraid of the luck of high deeds.”

“So,” saith the Norwegian chronicler, “not just the best friends, the earl left the king,” and went on in haste to Harold Hardrada of Norway.

True Hero of the North, true darling of War and of Song, was Harold Hardrada! At the terrible battle of Stiklestad, at which his brother, Saint Olave, had fallen, he was but fifteen years of age, but his body was covered with the wounds of a veteran. Escaping from the field, he lay concealed in the house of a Bonder peasant, remote in deep forests, till his wounds were healed. Thence, chanting by the way (for a poet’s soul burned bright in Hardrada), “that a day would come when his name would be great in the land he now left,” he went on into Sweden, thence into Russia, and after wild adventures in the East, joined, with the bold troop he had collected around him, that famous body-guard of the Greek emperors,² called the Væringers, and of these he became the chief. Jealousies between himself and the Greek General of

¹ “Snorro Sturleson.” Laing.

² The Væringers, or Varangi, mostly Northmen; this redoubtable force, the Janizaries of the Byzantine empire, afforded brilliant field, both of fortune and war, to the discontented spirits or outlawed heroes of the North. It was joined afterwards by many of the bravest and best born of the Saxon nobles, refusing to dwell under the yoke of the Norman. Scott, in “Count Robert of Paris,” which, if not one of his best romances, is yet full of truth and beauty, has described this renowned band with much poetical vigour and historical fidelity.

the Imperial forces (whom the Norwegian chronicler calls Gyrgar) ended in Harold's retirement with his Væringers into the Saracen land of Africa. Eighty castles stormed and taken, vast plunder in gold and in jewels, and nobler meed in the song of the Scald and the praise of the brave, attested the prowess of the great Scandinavian. New laurels, blood-stained, new treasures, sword-won, awaited him in Sicily; and thence, rough foretype of the coming crusader, he passed on to Jerusalem. His sword swept before him Moslem and robber. He bathed in Jordan, and knelt at the Holy Cross.

Returned to Constantinople, the desire for his northern home seized Hardrada. There he heard that his nephew Magnus, the illegitimate son of Saint Olave, had become King of Norway,—and he himself aspired to a throne. So he gave up his command under Zoe the empress; but, if Scald be believed, Zoe the empress loved the bold chief, whose heart was set on Maria her niece. To detain Hardrada, a charge of mal-appropriation, whether of pay or of booty, was brought against him. He was cast into prison. But when the brave are in danger, the saints send the fair to their help! Moved by a holy dream, a Greek lady lowered ropes from the roof of the tower to the dungeon wherein Hardrada was cast. He escaped from the prison, he aroused his Væringers, they flocked round their chief; he went to the house of his lady Maria, bore her off to the galley, put out into the Black Sea, reached Novgorod (at the friendly court of whose king he had safely lodged his vast spoils), sailed home to the North; and after such feats as became sea-king of old, received half of Norway from Magnus, and on the death of his nephew the whole of that kingdom passed to his sway. A king so wise and so wealthy, so bold and so dread, had never yet been known in the North. And this was the king to whom came Tostig the Earl, with the offer of England's crown.

It was one of the glorious nights of the North, and winter had already begun to melt into early spring, when two men sat under a kind of rustic porch of rough pine-logs, not very unlike those seen now in Switzerland and the Tyrol. This porch was constructed before a private door, to the rear of a

long, low, irregular building of wood which enclosed two or more courtyards, and covering an immense space of ground. This private door seemed placed for the purpose of immediate descent to the sea, for the ledge of the rock over which the log-porch spread its rude roof jutted over the ocean; and from it a rugged stair, cut through the crag, descended to the beach. The shore, with bold, strange, grotesque slab, and peak, and splinter, curved into a large creek; and close under the cliff were moored seven war-ships, high and tall, with prows and sterns all gorgeous with gilding in the light of the splendid moon. And that rude timber house, which seemed but a chain of barbarian huts linked into one, was a land palace of Hardrada of Norway; but the true halls of his royalty, the true seats of his empire, were the decks of those lofty war-ships.

Through the small lattice-work of the windows of the log-house lights blazed; from the roof-top smoke curled; from the hall on the other side of the dwelling came the din of tumultuous wassail: but the intense stillness of the outer air, hushed in frost, and luminous with stars, contrasted and seemed to rebuke the gross sounds of human revel. And that northern night seemed almost as bright as (but how much more augustly calm, than) the noon of the golden South!

On a table within the ample porch was an immense bowl of birchwood, mounted in silver, and filled with potent drink, and two huge horns, of size suiting the mighty wassailers of the age. The two men seemed to care nought for the stern air of the cold night — true that they were wrapped in furs reft from the Polar bear; but each had hot thoughts within, that gave greater warmth to the veins than the bowl or the bearskin.

They were host and guest; and as if with the restlessness of his thoughts, the host arose from his seat, and passed through the porch and stood on the bleak rock under the light of the moon; and so seen, he seemed scarcely human, but some war-chief of the farthest time,— yea, of a time ere the deluge had shivered those rocks, and left beds on the land for the realm of that icy sea. For Harold Hardrada was in

height above all the children of modern men. Five ells of Norway made the height of Harold Hardrada.¹ Nor was this stature accompanied by any of those imperfections in symmetry, nor by that heaviness of aspect, which generally render any remarkable excess above human stature and strength rather monstrous than commanding. On the contrary, his proportions were just, his appearance noble; and the sole defect that the chronicler remarks in his shape, was "that his hands and feet were large, but these were well made."²

His face had all the fair beauty of the Norseman; his hair, parted in locks of gold over a brow that bespoke the daring of the warrior and the genius of the bard, fell in glittering profusion to his shoulders; a short beard and long mustache of the same colour as the hair, carefully trimmed, added to the grand and masculine beauty of the countenance, in which the only blemish was the peculiarity of one eyebrow being somewhat higher than the other,³ which gave something more sinister to his frown, something more arch to his smile. For, quick of impulse, the Poet-Titan smiled and frowned often.

Harold Hardrada stood in the light of the moon, and gazing thoughtfully on the luminous sea. Tostig marked him for some moments where he sat in the porch, and then rose and joined him.

"Why should my words so disturb thee, O King of the Norsemen?"

"Is glory, then, a drug that soothes to sleep?" returned the Norwegian.

"I like thine answer," said Tostig, smiling, "and I like still more to watch thine eye gazing on the prows of thy war-

¹ Laing's Snorro Sturleson. — "The old Norwegian ell was less than the present ell; and Thorlasius reckons, in a note on this chapter, that Harold's stature would be about four Danish ells; namely, about eight feet." — Laing's note to the text. Allowing for the exaggeration of the chronicler, it seems probable, at least, that Hardrada exceeded seven feet, since (as Laing remarks in the same note), and as we shall see hereafter, "our English Harold offered him, according to both English and Danish authority, seven feet of land for a grave, or *as much more* as his stature, exceeding that of other men, might require."

² Snorro Sturleson. See Note Q.

³ Snorro Sturleson.

ships. Strange indeed it were if thou, who hast been fighting fifteen years for the petty kingdom of Denmark, shouldst hesitate now, when all England lies before thee to seize."

"I hesitate," replied the king, "because he whom Fortune has befriended so long, should beware how he strain her favours too far. Eighteen pitched battles fought I in the Saracen land, and in every one was a victor; never, at home or abroad, have I known shame and defeat. Doth the wind always blow from one point; and is Fate less unstable than the wind?"

"Now, out on thee, Harold Hardrada," said Tostig the fierce; "the good pilot wins his way through all winds, and the brave heart fastens fate to its flag. All men allow that the North never had warrior like thee; and now, in the mid-day of manhood, wilt thou consent to repose on the mere triumph of youth?"

"Nay," said the king, who, like all true poets, had something of the deep sense of a sage, and was, indeed, regarded as the most prudent as well as the most adventurous chief in the Northland,— "nay, it is not by such words, which my soul seconds too well, that thou canst entrap a ruler of men. Thou must show me the chances of success, as thou wouldest to a graybeard. For we should be as old men before we engage, and as youths when we wish to perform."

Then the traitor succinctly detailed all the weak points in the rule of his brother,— a treasury exhausted by the lavish and profitless waste of Edward; a land without castle or bulwark, even at the mouths of the rivers; a people grown inert by long peace, and so accustomed to own lord and king in the northern invaders, that a single successful battle might induce half the population to insist on the Saxon coming to terms with the foe, and yielding, as Ironsides did to Canute, one half of the realm. He enlarged on the terror of the Norsemen that still existed throughout England, and the affinity between the Northumbrians and East Anglians with the race of Hardrada. That affinity would not prevent them from resisting at the first; but grant success, and it would reconcile them to the after sway. And, finally, he aroused Hardrada's

emulation by the spur of the news that the Count of the Normans would seize the prize if he himself delayed to fore-stall him.

These various representations, and the remembrance of Canute's victory, decided Hardrada; and when Tostig ceased, he stretched his hand towards his slumbering war-ships and exclaimed:—

“Eno'; you have whetted the beaks of the ravens, and harnessed the steeds of the sea!”

CHAPTER VII.

MEANWHILE, King Harold of England had made himself dear to his people, and been true to the fame he had won as Harold the Earl. From the moment of his accession, “he showed himself pious, humble, and affable,¹ and omitted no occasions to show any token of bounteous liberality, gentleness, and courteous behaviour.” “The grievous customs, also, and taxes which his predecessors had raised, he either abolished or diminished; the ordinary wages of his servants and men-of-war he increased, and further showed himself very well bent to all virtue and goodness.”²

Extracting the pith from these eulogies, it is clear that, as wise statesman no less than as good king, Harold sought to strengthen himself in the three great elements of regal power,—Conciliation of the Church, which had been opposed to his father; the popular affection, on which his sole claim to the crown reposed; and the military force of the land, which had been neglected in the reign of his peaceful predecessor.

To the young Atheling he accorded a respect not before paid to him; and, while investing the descendant of the ancient

¹ Hoveden.

² Holinshed. Nearly all chroniclers (even, with scarce an exception, those most favouring the Normans) concur in the abilities and merits of Harold as a king.

line with princely state, and endowing him with large domains, his soul, too great for jealousy, sought to give more substantial power to his own most legitimate rival, by tender care and noble counsels, by efforts to raise a character feeble by nature, and denationalized by foreign rearing. In the same broad and generous policy, Harold encouraged all the merchants from other countries who had settled in England; nor were even such Normans as had escaped the general sentence of banishment on Godwin's return disturbed in their possessions. "In brief," saith the Anglo-Norman chronicler,¹ "no man was more prudent in the land, more valiant in arms, in the law more sagacious, in all probity more accomplished:" and "Ever active," says more mournfully the Saxon writer, "for the good of his country, he spared himself no fatigue by land or by sea."²

From this time Harold's private life ceased. Love and its charms were no more. The glow of romance had vanished. He was not one man; he was the state, the representative, the incarnation of Saxon England: his sway and the Saxon freedom to live or fall together!

The soul really grand is only tested in its errors. As we know the true might of the intellect by the rich resources and patient strength with which it redeems a failure, so do we prove the elevation of the soul by its courageous return into light, its instinctive rebound into higher air, after some error that has darkened its vision and soiled its plumes. A spirit less noble and pure than Harold's, once entering on the dismal world of enchanted superstition, had habituated itself to that nether atmosphere; once misled from hardy truth and healthful reason, it had plunged deeper and deeper into the maze. But, unlike his contemporary, Macbeth, the Man escaped from the lures of the Fiend. Not as Hecate in hell, but as Dian in heaven, did he confront the pale Goddess of Night. Before that hour in which he had deserted the human judgment for the ghostly delusion; before that day in which the brave heart, in its sudden desertion, had humbled his pride, the man, in his nature, was more strong than the god. Now,

¹ Vit. Harold. Chron. Ang. Norm. ii. 243.

² Hoveden.

purified by the flame that had scorched, and more nerved from the fall that had stunned, that great soul rose sublime through the wrecks of the Past, serene through the clouds of the Future, concentrating in its solitude the destinies of Mankind, and strong with instinctive Eternity amidst all the terrors of Time.

King Harold came from York,—whither he had gone to cement the new power of Morcar, in Northumbria, and personally to confirm the allegiance of the Anglo-Danes,—King Harold came from York, and in the halls of Westminster he found a monk who awaited him with the messages of William the Norman.

Bare-footed and serge-garbed, the Norman envoy strode to the Saxon's chair of state. His form was worn with mortification and fast, and his face was hueless and livid, with the perpetual struggle between zeal and the flesh.

"Thus saith William, Count of the Normans," began Hugues Maigrot, the monk: "With grief and amaze hath he heard that you, O Harold, his sworn liegeman, have, contrary to oath and to fealty, assumed the crown that belongs to himself. But, confiding in thy conscience, and forgiving a moment's weakness, he summons thee, mildly and brother-like, to fulfil thy vow. Send thy sister, that he may give her in marriage to one of his quens; give him up the stronghold of Dover; march to thy coast with thine armies to aid him,—thy liege lord,—and secure him the heritage of Edward his cousin. And thou shalt reign at his right hand, his daughter thy bride, Northumbria thy fief, and the saints thy protectors."

The king's lip was firm, though pale, as he answered:—

"My young sister, alas! is no more. Seven nights after I ascended the throne, she died; her dust in the grave is all I could send to the arms of the bridegroom. I cannot wed the child of thy count; the wife of Harold sits beside him." And he pointed to the proud beauty of Aldyth, enthroned under the drapery of gold. "For the vow that I took, I deny it not. But from a vow of compulsion, menaced with unworthy captivity, extorted from my lips by the very need of

the land whose freedom had been bound in my chains, — from a vow so compelled, Church and conscience absolve me. If the vow of a maiden on whom to bestow but her hand, when unknown to her parents, is judged invalid by the Church, how much more invalid the oath that would bestow on a stranger the fates of a nation,¹ against its knowledge and unconsulting its laws! This royalty of England hath ever rested on the will of the people, declared through its chiefs in their solemn assembly. They alone who could bestow it, have bestowed it on me. I have no power to resign it to another; and were I in my grave, the trust of the crown would not pass to the Norman, but return to the Saxon people."

"Is this, then, thy answer, unhappy son?" said the monk, with a sullen and gloomy aspect.

"Such is my answer."

"Then, sorrowing for thee, I utter the words of William. 'With sword and with mail will he come to punish the perjurer; and by the aid of Saint Michael, archangel of war, he will conquer his own.' Amen."

"By sea and by land, with sword and with mail, will we meet the invader," answered the king, with a flashing eye. "Thou hast said: — so depart."

The monk turned and withdrew.

"Let the priest's insolence chafe thee not, sweet lord," said Aldyth. "For the vow which thou mightest take as subject, what matters it now thou art king?"

Harold made no answer to Aldyth, but turned to his chamberlain, who stood behind his throne chair.

"Are my brothers without?"

"They are; and my lord the king's chosen council."

"Admit them. Pardon, Aldyth; affairs fit only for men claim me now."

The Lady of England took the hint, and rose.

"But the even-mete will summon thee soon," said she.

Harold, who had already descended from his chair of state, and was bending over a casket of papers on the table, replied, —

¹ Malmesbury.

"There is food *here* till the morrow; wait me not."

Aldyth sighed, and withdrew at the one door, while the thegns most in Harold's confidence entered at the other. But, once surrounded by her maidens, Aldyth forgot all, save that she was again a queen,—forgot all, even to the earlier and less gorgeous diadem which her lord's hand had shattered on the brows of the son of Pen Dragon.

Leofwine, still gay and blithe-hearted, entered first; Gurth followed; then Haco, then some half-score of the greater thegns.

They seated themselves at the table, and Gurth spoke first, —

"Tostig has been with Count William."

"I know it," said Harold.

"It is rumoured that he has passed to our uncle Sweyn."

"I foresaw it," said the king.

"And that Sweyn will aid him to reconquer England for the Dane."

"My bode reached Sweyn, with letters from Githa, before Tostig; my bode has returned this day. Sweyn has dismissed Tostig; Sweyn will send fifty ships, armed with picked men, to the aid of England."

"Brother," cried Leofwine, admiringly, "thou providest against danger ere we but surmise it."

"Tostig," continued the king, unheeding the compliment, "will be the first assailant: him we must meet. His fast friend is Malcolm of Scotland: him we must secure. Go thou, Leofwine, with these letters to Malcolm. The next fear is from the Welch. Go thou, Edwin of Mercia, to the princes of Wales. On thy way, strengthen the forts and deepen the dikes of the Marches. These tablets hold thy instructions. The Norman, as doubtless ye know, my thegns, hath sent to demand our crown, and hath announced the coming of his war. With the dawn I depart to our port at Sandwich,¹ to muster our fleets. Thou with me, Gurth."

"These preparations need much treasure," said an old thegn, "and thou hast lessened the taxes at the hour of need."

¹ Supposed to be our first port for shipbuilding. — FOSBROOKE, p. 320.

"Not yet is it the hour of need. When it comes, our people will the more readily meet it with their gold as with their iron. There was great wealth in the House of Godwin; that wealth mans the ships of England. What has thou there, Haco?"

"Thy new-issued coin: it hath on its reverse the word 'PEACE.'"¹

Who ever saw one of those coins of the Last Saxon King, the bold simple head on the one side, that single word "Peace" on the other, and did not feel awed and touched? What pathos in that word compared with the fate which it failed to propitiate!

"Peace," said Harold: "to all that doth not render peace, slavery. Yea, may I live to leave peace to our children! Now, peace only rests on our preparation for war. You, Morcar, will return with all speed to York, and look well to the mouth of the Humber."

Then, turning to each of the thegns successively, he gave to each his post and his duty; and that done, converse grew more general. The many things needful that had been long rotting in neglect under the monk-king, and now sprung up, craving instant reform, occupied them long and anxiously; but cheered and inspirited by the vigour and foresight of Harold, whose earlier slowness of character seemed winged by the occasion into rapid decision (as is not uncommon with the Englishman), all difficulties seemed light, and hope and courage were in every breast.



CHAPTER VIII.

BACK went Hugues Maigrot, the monk, to William, and told the reply of Harold to the duke, in the presence of Lanfranc. William himself heard it in gloomy silence, for Fitz-

¹ Pax.

osborne as yet had been wholly unsuccessful in stirring up the Norman barons to an expedition so hazardous, in a cause so doubtful; and though prepared for the defiance of Harold, the duke was not prepared with the means to enforce his threats and make good his claim.

So great was his abstraction, that he suffered the Lombard to dismiss the monk without a word spoken by him; and he was first startled from his reverie by Lanfranc's pale hand on his vast shoulder, and Lanfranc's low voice in his dreamy ear,—

"Up! Hero of Europe; for thy cause is won! Up! and write with thy bold characters, bold as if graved with the point of the sword, my credentials to Rome. Let me depart ere the sun sets; and as I go, look on the sinking orb, and behold the sun of the Saxon that sets evermore on England!"

Then briefly, that ablest statesman of the age (and forgive him, despite our modern lights, we must; for, sincere son of the Church, he regarded the violated oath of Harold as entailing the legitimate forfeiture of his realm, and, ignorant of true political freedom, looked upon Church and Learning as the only civilizers of men),—then briefly Lanfranc detailed to the listening Norman the outline of the arguments by which he intended to move the Pontifical court to the Norman side; and enlarged upon the vast accession throughout all Europe which the solemn sanction of the Church would bring to his strength. William's re-awaking and ready intellect soon seized upon the importance of the object pressed upon him. He interrupted the Lombard, drew pen and parchment towards him, and wrote rapidly. Horses were harnessed, horsemen equipped in haste, and with no unfitting retinue Lanfranc departed on the mission, the most important in its consequences that ever passed from potentate to pontiff.¹ Rebraced to its purpose by Lanfranc's cheering assurances,

¹ Some of the Norman chroniclers state that Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been expelled from England at Godwin's return, was Lanfranc's companion in this mission; but more trustworthy authorities assure us that Robert had been dead some years before, not long surviving his return into Normandy.

the resolute, indomitable soul of William now applied itself, night and day, to the difficult task of rousing his haughty vavasours. Yet weeks passed before he could even meet a select council composed of his own kinsmen and most trusted lords. These, however, privately won over, promised to serve him "with body and goods." But one and all they told him he must gain the consent of the whole principality in a general council. That council was convened: thither came not only lords and knights, but merchants and traders,—all the rising middle class of a thriving State.

The duke bared his wrongs, his claims, and his schemes. The assembly would not or did not discuss the matter in his presence, they would not be awed by its influence; and William retired from the hall. Various were the opinions, stormy the debate; and so great the disorder grew, that Fitzosborne, rising in the midst, exclaimed,—

"Why this dispute; why this unduteous discord? Is not William your lord? Hath he not need of you? Fail him now,—and you know him well—by God, he will remember it! Aid him, and—you know him well—large are his rewards to service and love!"

Up rose at once baron and merchant; and when at last their spokesman was chosen, that spokesman said,—

"William is our lord; is it not enough to pay to our lord his dues? No aid do we owe beyond the seas! Sore harassed and taxed are we already by his wars! Let him fail in this strange and unparalleled hazard, and our land is undone!"

Loud applause followed this speech; the majority of the council were against the duke.

"Then," said Fitzosborne, craftily, "I, who know the means of each man present, will, with your leave, represent your necessities to your count, and make such modest offer of assistance as may please ye, yet not chafe your liege."

Into the trap of this proposal the opponents fell; and Fitzosborne, at the head of the body, returned to William.

The Lord of Breteuil approached the dais, on which William sat alone, his great sword in his hand, and thus spoke,—

"My liege, I may well say that never prince had people more leal than yours, nor that have more proved their faith and love by the burdens they have borne and the moneys they have granted."

A universal murmur of applause followed these words. "Good! good!" almost shouted the merchants especially. William's brows met, and he looked very terrible. The Lord of Breteuil gracefully waved his hand, and resumed,—

"Yea, my liege, much have they borne for your glory and need; much more will they bear."

The faces of the audience fell.

"Their service does not compel them to aid you beyond the seas."

The faces of the audience brightened.

"But now they *will* aid you, in the land of the Saxon as in that of the Frank."

"How?" cried a stray voice or two.

"Hush, O *gentilz amys*. Forward, then, O my liege, and spare them in nought. He who has hitherto supplied you with two good mounted soldiers will now grant you four; and he who —"

"No, no, no!" roared two thirds of the assembly; "we charged you with no such answer; we said not that, nor that shall it be!"

Out stepped a baron.

"Within this country, to defend it, we will serve our count; but to aid him to conquer another man's country, no!"

Out stepped a knight.

"If once we rendered this double service, beyond seas as at home, it would be held a right and a custom hereafter; and we should be as mercenary soldiers, not free-born Normans."

Out stepped a merchant.

"And we and our children would be burdened forever to feed one man's ambition, whenever he saw a king to dethrone, or a realm to seize."

And then cried a general chorus,—

"It shall not be,— it shall not!"

The assembly broke at once into knots of tens, twenties, thirties, gesticulating and speaking aloud, like freemen in anger; and ere William, with all his prompt dissimulation, could do more than smother his rage, and sit griping his sword-hilt, and setting his teeth, the assembly dispersed.

Such were the free souls of the Normans under the greatest of their chiefs; and had those souls been less free, England had not been enslaved in one age, to become free again, God grant, to the end of time!

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGH the blue skies over England there rushed the bright stranger,—a meteor, a comet, a fiery star! “such as no man before ever saw;” it appeared on the 8th, before the kalends of May; seven nights did it shine,¹ and the faces of sleepless men were pale under the angry glare.

The river of Thames rushed blood-red in the beam; the winds at play on the broad waves of the Humber broke the surge of the billows into sparkles of fire. With three streamers, sharp and long as the sting of a dragon, the foreboder of wrath rushed through the hosts of the stars. On every ruinous fort, by seacoast and march, the warder crossed his breast to behold it; on hill and in thoroughfare, crowds nightly assembled to gaze on the terrible star. Muttering hymns, monks huddled together round the altars, as if to exorcise the land of a demon. The gravestone of the Saxon father-chief was lit up, as with the coil of the lightning; and the Morthwyrtha looked from the mound, and saw in her visions of awe the Valkyrs in the train of the fiery star.

On the roof of his palace stood Harold the King, and with folded arms he looked on the Rider of Night; and up the stairs of the turret came the soft steps of Haco, and stealing near to the king, he said, —

¹ Saxon Chronicle.

"Arm in haste, for the bodes have come breathless to tell thee that Tostig, thy brother, with pirate and war-ship, is wasting thy shores and slaughtering thy people!"

CHAPTER X.

TOSTIG, with the ships he had gained both from Norman and Norwegian, recruited by Flemish adventurers, fled fast from the banners of Harold. After plundering the Isle of Wight and the Hampshire coasts, he sailed up the Humber, where his vain heart had counted on friends yet left him in his ancient earldom; but Harold's soul of vigour was everywhere. Morcar, prepared by the king's bodes, encountered and chased the traitor, and, deserted by most of his ships, with but twelve small craft Tostig gained the shores of Scotland. There, again forestalled by the Saxon King, he failed in succour from Malcolm, and retreating to the Orkneys, waited the fleets of Hardrada.

And now Harold, thus at freedom for defence against a foe more formidable and less unnatural, hastened to make secure both the sea and the coast against William the Norman. "So great a ship force, so great a land force, no king in the land had before." All the summer, his fleets swept the channel; his forces "lay everywhere by the sea."

But alas! now came the time when the improvident waste of Edward began to be felt. Provisions and pay for the armaments failed.¹ On the defective resources at Harold's disposal, no modern historian hath sufficiently dwelt. The last Saxon king, the chosen of the people, had not those levies, and could impose not those burdens, which made his successors mighty in war; and men began now to think that, after all, there was no fear of this Norman invasion. The summer was gone; the autumn was come; was it likely that William

¹ "When it was the nativity of Saint Mary, then were the men's provisions gone, and no man could any longer keep them there." — *Saxon Chronicle*.

would dare to trust himself in an enemy's country as the winter drew near? The Saxons, unlike their fiercer kindred of Scandinavia, had no pleasure in war; they fought well in front of a foe, but they loathed the tedious preparations and costly sacrifices which prudence demanded for self-defence. They now revolted from a strain upon their energies, of the necessity of which they were not convinced! Joyous at the temporary defeat of Tostig, men said, "Marry, a joke indeed, that the Norman will put his shaven head into the hornets' nest! Let him come, if he dare!"

Still, with desperate effort, and at much risk of popularity, Harold held together a force sufficient to repel any *single* invader. From the time of his accession his sleepless vigilance had kept watch on the Norman, and his spies brought him news of all that passed.

And now what had passed in the councils of William? The abrupt disappointment which the Grand Assembly had occasioned him did not last very long. Made aware that he could not trust to the spirit of an assembly, William now artfully summoned merchant and knight and baron, one by one. Submitted to the eloquence, the promises, the craft, of that master intellect, and to the awe of that imposing presence; unassisted by the courage which inferiors take from numbers, one by one yielded to the will of the count, and subscribed his quota for moneys, for ships, and for men. And while this went on, Lanfranc was at work in the Vatican. At that time the Archdeacon of the Roman Church was the famous Hildebrand. This extraordinary man, fit fellow-spirit to Lanfranc, nursed one darling project, the success of which indeed founded the true temporal power of the Roman pontiffs. It was no less than that of converting the mere religious ascendancy of the Holy See into the actual sovereignty over the States of Christendom. The most immediate agents of this gigantic scheme were the Normans, who had conquered Naples by the arm of the adventurer Robert Guiscard, and under the gonfanon of Saint Peter. Most of the new Norman countships and dukedoms thus created in Italy had declared themselves fiefs of the Church; and the successor of the Apostle

might well hope, by aid of the Norman priest-knights, to extend his sovereignty over Italy, and thence dictate to the kings beyond the Alps.

The aid of Hildebrand in behalf of William's claims was obtained at once by Lanfranc. The profound Archdeacon of Rome saw at a glance the immense power that would accrue to the Church by the mere act of arrogating to itself the disposition of crowns, subjecting rival princes to abide by its decision, and fixing the men of its choice on the thrones of the North. Despite all its slavish superstition, the Saxon Church was obnoxious to Rome. Even the pious Edward had offended, by withholding the old levy of Peter Pence; and simony, a crime peculiarly reprobated by the pontiff, was notorious in England. Therefore there was much to aid Hildebrand in the Assembly of the Cardinals, when he brought before them the oath of Harold, the violation of the sacred relics, and demanded that the pious Normans, true friends to the Roman Church, should be permitted to Christianize the barbarous Saxons,¹ and William be nominated as heir to a throne promised to him by Edward, and forfeited by the perjury of Harold. Nevertheless, to the honour of that assembly, and of man, there was a holy opposition to this wholesale barter of human rights,—this sanction of an armed onslaught on a Christian people. "It is infamous," said the good, "to authorize homicide." But Hildebrand was all-powerful, and prevailed.

William was at high feast with his barons when Lanfranc dismounted at his gates and entered his hall.

"Hail to thee, King of England!" he said. "I bring the bull that excommunicates Harold and his adherents; I bring to thee the gift of the Roman Church, the land and royalty of

¹ It is curious to notice how England was represented as a country almost heathen; its conquest was regarded quite as a pious, benevolent act of charity,—a sort of mission for converting the savages. And all this while England was under the most slavish ecclesiastical domination, and the priesthood possessed a third of its land! But the heart of England never forgave that league of the Pope with the Conqueror; and the seeds of the Reformed Religion were trampled deep into the Saxon soil by the feet of the invading Norman.

England. I bring to thee the gonfanon hallowed by the heir of the Apostle, and the very ring that contains the precious relic of the Apostle himself! Now who will shrink from thy side? Publish thy ban, not in Normandy alone, but in every region and realm where the Church is honoured. This is the first war of the Cross."

Then indeed was it seen,—that might of the Church! Soon as were made known the sanction and gifts of the Pope, all the Continent stirred as to the blast of the trump in the Crusade, of which that war was the herald. From Maine and from Anjou, from Poitou and Bretagne, from France and from Flanders, from Aquitaine and Burgundy, flashed the spear, galloped the steed. The robber-chiefs from the castles now gray on the Rhine; the hunters and bandits from the roots of the Alps; baron and knight, varlet and vagrant,—all came to the flag of the Church,—to the pillage of England. For side by side with the Pope's holy bull was the martial ban: "Good pay and broad lands to every one who will serve Count William with spear and with sword and with cross-bow." And the duke said to Fitzosborne, as he parcelled out the fair fields of England into Norman fiefs, —

"Harold hath not the strength of mind to promise the least of those things that belong to me. But I have the right to promise that which is mine, and also that which belongs to him. He must be the victor who can give away both his own and what belongs to his foe."¹

All on the continent of Europe regarded England's king as accursed, William's enterprise as holy; and mothers who had turned pale when their sons went forth to the boar-chase, sent their darlings to enter their names, for the weal of their souls, in the swollen muster-roll of William the Norman. Every port now in Neustria was busy with terrible life; in every wood was heard the axe felling logs for the ships; from every anvil flew the sparks from the hammer, as iron took shape into helmet and sword. All things seemed to favour

¹ William of Poitiers.—The native sagacity of this bandit argument, and the Norman's contempt for Harold's deficiency in "strength of mind," are exquisite illustrations of character.

the Church's chosen one. Conan, Count of Bretagne, sent to claim the Duchy of Normandy, as legitimate heir. A few days afterwards, Conan died, poisoned (as had died his father before him) by the mouth of his horn and the web of his gloves; and the new Count of Bretagne sent his sons to take part against Harold.

All the armament mustered at the roadstead of St. Valery, at the mouth of the Somme. But the winds were long hostile, and the rains fell in torrents.



CHAPTER XI.

AND now, while war thus hungered for England at the mouth of the Somme, the last and most renowned of the sea-kings, Harold Hardrada, entered his galley, the tallest and strongest of a fleet of three hundred sail, that peopled the seas round Solundir. And a man named Gyrdir, on board the king's ship, dreamed a dream.¹ He saw a great witch-wife standing on an isle of the Sulen, with a fork in one hand and a trough in the other.² He saw her pass over the whole fleet; by each of the three hundred ships he saw her; and a fowl sat on the stern of each ship, and that fowl was a raven; and he heard the witch-wife sing this song:—

“From the East I allure him,
At the West I secure him;
In the feast I foresee
Rare the relics for me;
Red the drink, white the bones.

¹ Snorro Sturleson.

² Does any Scandinavian scholar know why the trough was so associated with the images of Scandinavian witchcraft? A witch was known, when seen behind, by a kind of trough-like shape; there must be some symbol, of very ancient mythology, in this superstition.

"The ravens sit greeding,
And watching, and heading;
Thoro' wind, over water,
Comes scent of the slaughter,
And ravens sit greeding
Their share of the bones."

"Thoro' wind, thoro' weather,
We're sailing together;
I sail with the ravens;
I watch with the ravens;
I snatch from the ravens
My share of the bones."

There was also a man called Thord,¹ in a ship that lay near the king's; and he too dreamed a dream. He saw the fleet nearing land, and that land was England. And on the land was a battle-array twofold, and many banners were flapping on both sides. And before the army of the land-folk was riding a huge witch-wife upon a wolf; the wolf had a man's carcass in his mouth, and the blood was dripping and dropping from his jaws; and when the wolf had eaten up that carcass, the witch-wife threw another into his jaws; and so, one after another; and the wolf crunched and swallowed them all. And the witch-wife sang this song:—

"The green waving fields
Are hidden behind,
The flash of the shields,
And the rush of the banners
That toss in the wind."

"But Skade's eagle eyes
Pierce the wall of the steel,
And behold from the skies
What the earth would conceal;
O'er the rush of the banners
She poises her wing,
And marks with a shadow
The brow of the king."

¹ Snorro Sturleson.

"And, in bode of his doom,
 Jaw of Wolf, be the tomb
 Of the bones and the flesh,
 Gore-bedabbled and fresh,
 That cranch and that drip
 Under fang and from lip,
 As I ride in the van
 Of the feasters on man,
 With the king !

"Grim wolf, sate thy maw,
 Full enow shall there be,
 Hairy jaw, hungry maw,
 Both for ye and for me !

"Meaner food be the feast
 Of the fowl and the beast;
 But the witch, for her share,
 Takes the best of the fare;
 And the witch shall be fed
 With the king of the dead,
 When she rides in the van
 Of the slayers of man,
 With the king."

And King Harold dreamed a dream. And he saw before him his brother, Saint Olave. And the dead to the Scald-King sang this song: —

"Bold as thou in the fight,
 Blithe as thou in the hall,
 Shone the noon of my might,
 Ere the night of my fall !

"How humble is death,
 And how haughty is life ;
 And how fleeting the breath
 Between slumber and strife !

"All the earth is too narrow,
 O life, for thy tread !
 Two strides o'er the barrow
 Can measure the dead.

"Yet mighty that space is
 Which seemeth so small ;
 The realm of all races,
 With room for them all !"

But Harold Hardrada scorned witch-wife and dream; and his fleets sailed on. Tostig joined him off the Orkney Isles, and this great armament soon came in sight of the shores of England. They landed at Cleveland,¹ and at the dread of the terrible Norsemen, the coastmen fled or submitted. With booty and plunder they sailed on to Scarborough; but there the townsfolk were brave, and the walls were strong. The Norsemen ascended a hill above the town, lit a huge pile of wood, and tossed the burning piles down on the roofs. House after house caught the flame, and through the glare and the crash rushed the men of Hardrada. Great was the slaughter, and ample the plunder; and the town, awed and depopulated, submitted to flame and to sword.

Then the fleet sailed up the Humber and Ouse, and landed at Riccall, not far from York; but Morcar, the Earl of Northumbria, came out with all his forces,—all the stout men and tall of the great race of the Anglo-Dane.

Then Hardrada advanced his flag, called Land-Eyda, the “Ravager of the World,”² and, chanting a war-stave, led his men to the onslaught.

The battle was fierce, but short. The English troops were defeated, they fled into York; and the Ravager of the World was borne in triumph to the gates of the town. An exiled chief, however tyrannous and hateful, hath ever some friends among the desperate and lawless; and success ever finds allies among the weak and the craven,—so many Northumbrians now came to the side of Tostig. Dissension and mutiny broke out amidst the garrison within; Morcar, unable to control the townsfolk, was driven forth with those still true to their country and king, and York agreed to open its gates to the conquering invader.

At the news of this foe on the north side of the land, King Harold was compelled to withdraw all the forces at watch in the south against the tardy invasion of William. It was the

¹ Snorro Sturleson.

² So Thierry translates the word: others, the Land-ravager. In Danish, the word is Land-ode, in Icelandic, Land-eydo.—Note to Thierry's “Hist. of the Conq. of England,” book iii. vol. vi. p. 169 (of Hazlitt's translation).

middle of September; eight months had elapsed since the Norman had launched forth his vaunting threat. Would he now dare to come? Come or not, *that* foe was afar, and *this* was in the heart of the country!

Now, York having thus capitulated, all the land round was humbled and awed; and Hardrada and Tostig were blithe and gay; and many days, thought they, must pass ere Harold the King can come from the south to the north.

The camp of the Norsemen was at Stanford Bridge, and that day it was settled that they should formally enter York. Their ships lay in the river beyond; a large portion of the armament was with the ships. The day was warm, and the men with Hardrada had laid aside their heavy mail and were "making merry," talking of the plunder of York, jeering at Saxon valour, and gloating over thoughts of the Saxon maids, whom Saxon men had failed to protect, when suddenly between them and the town rose and rolled a great cloud of dust. High it rose, and fast it rolled, and from the heart of the cloud shone the spear and the shield.

"What army comes yonder?" said Harold Hardrada.

"Surely," answered Tostig, "it comes from the town that we are to enter as conquerors, and can be but the friendly Northumbrians who have deserted Morcar for me."

Nearer and nearer came the force, and the shine of the arms was like the glancing of ice.

"Advance the World-Ravager!" cried Harold Hardrada, "draw up, and to arms!"

Then, picking out three of his briskest youths, he despatched them to the force on the river with orders to come up quick to the aid. For already, through the cloud and amidst the spears, was seen the flag of the English King. On the previous night King Harold had entered York, unknown to the invaders, appeased the mutiny, cheered the townsfolks; and now came like a thunderbolt borne by the winds, to clear the air of England from the clouds of the North.

Both armaments drew up in haste, and Hardrada formed his array in the form of a circle,—the line long but not

deep, the wings curving round till they met,¹ shield to shield. Those who stood in the first rank set their spear-shafts on the ground, the points level with the breast of a horseman; those in the second, with spears yet lower, level with the breast of a horse; thus forming a double palisade against the charge of cavalry. In the centre of this circle was placed the Ravager of the World, and round it a rampart of shields. Behind that rampart was the accustomed post at the onset of battle for the king and his body-guard. But Tostig was in front, with his own Northumbrian lion banner, and his chosen men.

While this army was thus being formed, the English King was marshalling his force in the far more formidable tactics, which his military science had perfected from the warfare of the Danes. That form of battalion, invincible hitherto under his leadership, was in the manner of a wedge, or triangle, thus Δ. So that, in attack, the men marched on the foe presenting the smallest possible surface to the missives, and, in defence, all three lines faced the assailants. King Harold cast his eye over the closing lines, and then, turning to Gurth, who rode by his side, said,—

“Take one man from yon hostile army, and with what joy should we charge on the Northmen!”

“I conceive thee,” answered Gurth, mournfully, “and the same thought of that one man makes my arm feel palsied.”

The king mused, and drew down the nasal bar of his helmet.

“Thegns,” said he suddenly, to the score of riders who grouped round him, “follow.” And shaking the rein of his horse, King Harold rode straight to that part of the hostile front from which rose, above the spears, the Northumbrian banner of Tostig. Wondering, but mute, the twenty thegns followed him. Before the grim array, and hard by Tostig’s banner, the king checked his steed and cried,—

“Is Tostig, the son of Godwin and Githa, by the flag of the Northumbrian earldom?”

With his helmet raised, and his Norwegian mantle flowing

¹ Snorro Sturleson.

over his mail, Earl Tostig rode forth at that voice, and came up to the speaker.¹

"What wouldst thou with me, daring foe?"

The Saxon horseman paused, and his deep voice trembled tenderly, as he answered slowly,—

"Thy brother, King Harold, sends to salute thee. Let not the sons from the same womb wage unnatural war in the soil of their fathers."

"What will Harold the King give to his brother?" answered Tostig. "Northumbria already he hath bestowed on the son of his House's foe."

The Saxon hesitated, and a rider by his side took up the word.

"If the Northumbrians will receive thee again, Northumbria shalt thou have, and the king will bestow his late earldom of Wessex on Morcar; if the Northumbrians reject thee, thou shalt have all the lordships which King Harold hath promised to Gurth."

"This is well," answered Tostig; and he seemed to pause as in doubt,—when, made aware of this parley, King Harold Hardrada, on his coal-black steed, with his helm all shining with gold, rode from the lines, and came into hearing.

"Ha!" said Tostig, then turning round, as the giant form of the Norse King threw its vast shadow over the ground. "And if I take the offer, what will Harold son of Godwin give to my friend and ally Hardrada of Norway?"

The Saxon rider reared his head at these words, and gazed on the large front of Hardrada, as he answered, loud and distinct,—

"Seven feet of land for a grave, or, seeing that he is taller than other men, as much more as his corse may demand!"

"Then go back, and tell Harold my brother to get ready for battle; for never shall the Scalds and the warriors of Norway say that Tostig lured their king in his cause, to be-

¹ See Snorro Sturleson for this parley between Harold in person and Tostig. The account differs from the Saxon chroniclers, but in this particular instance is likely to be as accurate.

tray him to his foe. Here did he come, and here came I, to win as the brave win, or die as the brave die!"

A rider of younger and slighter form than the rest here whispered the Saxon king,—

"Delay no more, or thy men's hearts will fear treason."

"The tie is rent from my heart, O Haco," answered the king, "and the heart flies back to our England."

He waved his hand, turned his steed, and rode off. The eye of Hardrada followed the horseman.

"And who," he asked calmly, "is that man who spoke so well?"¹

"King Harold!" answered Tostig, briefly.

"How!" cried the Norseman, reddening, "how was not that made known to me before? Never should he have gone back,— never told hereafter the doom of this day!"

With all his ferocity, his envy, his grudge to Harold, and his treason to England, some rude notions of honour still lay confused in the breast of the Saxon; and he answered stoutly,—

"Imprudent was Harold's coming, and great his danger; but he came to offer me peace and dominion. Had I betrayed him, I had not been his foe, but his murderer!"

The Norse King smiled approvingly, and, turning to his chiefs, said dryly,—

"That man was shorter than some of us, but he rode firm in his stirrups."

And then this extraordinary person, who united in himself all the types of an age that vanished forever in his grave, and who is the more interesting, as in him we see the race from which the Norman sprang, began, in the rich full voice that pealed deep as an organ, to chant his impromptu war-song. He halted in the midst, and with great composure said,—

"That verse is but ill-tuned: I must try a better."¹

He passed his hand over his brow, mused an instant, and then, with his fair face all illumined, he burst forth as inspired.

This time, air, rhythm, words, all so chimed in with his

¹ Snorro Sturleson.

own enthusiasm and that of his men, that the effect was inexpressible. It was, indeed, like the charm of those runes which are said to have maddened the Berserker with the frenzy of war.

Meanwhile the Saxon phalanx came on, slow and firm, and in a few minutes the battle began. It commenced first with the charge of the English cavalry (never numerous), led by Leofwine and Haco, but the double palisade of the Norsemen's spears formed an impassable barrier; and the horsemen, recoiling from the frieze, rode round the iron circle without other damage than the spear and javelin could effect. Meanwhile, King Harold, who had dismounted, marched, as was his wont, with the body of footmen. He kept his post in the hollow of the triangular wedge, whence he could best issue his orders. Avoiding the side over which Tostig presided, he halted his array in full centre of the enemy, where the Ravager of the World, streaming high above the inner rampart of shields, showed the presence of the giant Hardrada.

The air was now literally darkened with the flights of arrows and spears; and in a war of missiles, the Saxons were less skilled than the Norsemen. Still King Harold restrained the ardour of his men, who, sore harassed by the darts, yearned to close on the foe. He himself, standing on a little eminence, more exposed than his meanest soldier, deliberately eyed the sallies of the horse, and watched the moment he foresaw, when, encouraged by his own suspense and the feeble attacks of the cavalry, the Norsemen would lift their spears from the ground, and advance themselves to the assault. That moment came; unable to withhold their own fiery zeal, stimulated by the tramp and the clash, and the war hymns of their king and his choral Scalds, the Norsemen broke ground and came on.

"To your axes, and charge!" cried Harold; and passing at once from the centre to the front, he led on the array.

The impetus of that artful phalanx was tremendous; it pierced through the ring of the Norwegians; it clove into the rampart of shields; and King Harold's battle-axe was the first that shivered that wall of steel; his step the first

that strode into the innermost circle that guarded the Ravager of the World.

Then forth, from under the shade of that great flag, came, himself also on foot, Harold Hardrada; shouting and chanting, he leaped with long strides into the thick of the onslaught. He had flung away his shield, and swaying with both hands his enormous sword, he hewed down man after man till space grew clear before him; and the English, recoiling in awe before an image of height and strength that seemed superhuman, left but one form standing firm, and in front, to oppose his way.

At that moment the whole strife seemed not to belong to an age comparatively modern,—it took a character of remotest old; and Thor and Odin seemed to have returned to the earth. Behind this towering and Titan warrior, their wild hair streaming long under their helms, came his Scalds, all singing their hymns, drunk with the madness of battle. And the Ravager of the World tossed and flapped as it followed, so that the vast raven depicted on its folds seemed horrid with life. And calm and alone, his eye watchful, his axe lifted, his foot ready for rush or for spring — but firm as an oak against flight — stood the Last of the Saxon Kings.

Down bounded Hardrada, and down shore his sword; King Harold's shield was cloven in two, and the force of the blow brought himself to his knee. But as swift as the flash of that sword, he sprang to his feet; and while Hardrada still bowed his head, not recovered from the force of his blow, the axe of the Saxon came so full on his helmet, that the giant reeled, dropped his sword, and staggered back; his Scalds and his chiefs rushed around him. That gallant stand of King Harold saved his English from flight; and now, as they saw him almost lost in the throng, yet still cleaving his way — on, on — to the raven standard, they rallied with one heart, and shouting forth, “Out, out! Holy Crosse!” forced their way to his side, and the fight now waged hot and equal, hand to hand. Meanwhile Hardrada, borne a little apart, and relieved from his dinted helmet, recovered the shock of the weightiest blow that had ever dimmed his eye and numbed

his hand. Tossing the helmet on the ground, his bright locks glittering like sunbeams, he rushed back to the *mélée*. Again helm and mail went down before him; again through the crowd he saw the arm that had smitten him; again he sprang forwards to finish the war with a blow,—when a shaft from some distant bow pierced the throat which the casque now left bare; a sound like the wail of a death-song murmured brokenly from his lips, which then gushed out with blood, and tossing up his arms wildly, he fell to the ground, a corpse. At that sight, a yell of such terror and woe and wrath, all commingled, broke from the Norsemen, that it hushed the very war for the moment!

“On!” cried the Saxon king; “let our earth take its spoiler! On to the standard, and the day is our own!”

“On to the standard!” cried Haco, who, his horse slain under him, all bloody with wounds not his own, now came to the king’s side. Grim and tall rose the standard, and the streamer shrieked and flapped in the wind as if the raven had voice, when, right before Harold, right between him and the banner, stood Tostig his brother, known by the splendour of his mail, the gold work on his mantle,—known by the fierce laugh and defying voice.

“What matters?” cried Haco; “strike, O King, for thy crown!”

Harold’s hand gripped Haco’s arm convulsively; he lowered his axe, turned round, and passed shudderingly away.

Both armies now paused from the attack; for both were thrown into great disorder, and each gladly gave respite to the other, to re-form its own shattered array.

The Norsemen were not the soldiers to yield because their leader was slain,—rather the more resolute to fight, since revenge was now added to valour; yet, but for the daring and promptness with which Tostig had cut his way to the standard, the day had been already decided.

During the pause, Harold, summoning Gurth, said to him in great emotion, “For the sake of Nature, for the love of God, go, O Gurth,—go to Tostig; urge him, now Hardrada is dead, urge him to peace. All that we can proffer with

honour, proffer,— quarter and free retreat to every Norseman.¹ Oh, save me, save us, from a brother's blood!"

Gurth lifted his helmet, and kissed the mailed hand that grasped his own.

"I go," said he. And so, bareheaded, and with a single trumpeter, he went to the hostile lines.

Harold awaited him in great agitation; nor could any man have guessed what bitter and awful thoughts lay in that heart, from which, in the way to power, tie after tie had been wrenched away. He did not wait long; and even before Gurth rejoined him, he knew by a unanimous shout of fury, to which the clash of countless shields chimed in, that the mission had been in vain.

Tostig had refused to hear Gurth, save in presence of the Norwegian chiefs; and when the message had been delivered, they all cried, "We would rather fall one across the corpse of the other² than leave a field in which our king was slain."

"Ye hear them," said Tostig; "as they speak, speak I."

"Not mine this guilt, *too*, O God!" said Harold, solemnly lifting his hand on high. "Now, then, to duty!"

By this time the Norwegian reinforcements had arrived from the ships, and this for a short time rendered the conflict that immediately ensued uncertain and critical. But Harold's generalship was now as consummate as his valour had been daring. He kept his men true to their irrefragable line. Even if fragments splintered off, each fragment threw itself into the form of the resistless wedge. One Norwegian, standing on the bridge of Stamford, long guarded that pass; and no less than forty Saxons are said to have perished by his arm. To him the English King sent a generous pledge, not only of safety for the life, but honour for the valour. The viking refused to surrender, and fell at last by a javelin from the hand of Haco. As if in him had been embodied the unyielding war-god of the Norsemen, in that death died the last hope of the vikings. They fell literally where they stood; many, from sheer exhaustion and the weight of their

¹ Sharon Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 396. Snorro Sturleson.

² Snorro Sturleson.

mail, died without a blow.¹ And in the shades of nightfall, Harold stood amidst the shattered rampart of shields, his foot on the corpse of the standard-bearer, his hand on the Ravager of the World.

"Thy brother's corpse is borne yonder," said Haco, in the ear of the king, as wiping the blood from his sword, he plunged it back into the sheath.

CHAPTER XII.

YOUNG OLAVE, the son of Hardrada, had happily escaped the slaughter. A strong detachment of the Norwegians had still remained with the vessels, and amongst them some prudent old chiefs, who, foreseeing the probable results of the day, and knowing that Hardrada would never quit, save as a conqueror or a corpse, the field on which he had planted the Ravager of the World, had detained the prince almost by force from sharing the fate of his father. But ere those vessels could put out to sea, the vigorous measures of the Saxon King had already intercepted the retreat of the vessels. And then, ranging their shields as a wall round their masts, the bold vikings at least determined to die as men. But with the morning came King Harold himself to the banks of the river, and behind him, with trailed lances, a solemn procession that bore the body of the Scald-King. They halted on the margin, and a boat was launched towards the Norwegian fleet, bearing a monk, who demanded the chiefs to send a deputation, headed by the young prince himself, to receive the corpse of their king, and hear the proposals of the Saxon.

The vikings, who had anticipated no preliminaries to the massacre they awaited, did not hesitate to accept these over-

¹ The quick succession of events allowed the Saxon army no time to bury the slain; and the bones of the invaders whitened the field of battle for many years afterwards.

tures. Twelve of the most famous chiefs still surviving, and Olave himself, entered the boat; and, standing between his brothers, Leofwine and Gurth, Harold thus accosted them,—

“Your king invaded a people that had given him no offence; he has paid the forfeit. We war not with the dead! Give to his remains the honours due to the brave. Without ransom or condition, we yield to you what can no longer harm us. And for thee, young prince,” continued the king, with a tone of pity in his voice, as he contemplated the stately boyhood, and proud, but deep grief in the face of Olave; “for thee, wilt thou not live to learn that the wars of Odin are treason to the Faith of the Cross? We have conquered,—we dare not butcher. Take such ships as ye need for those that survive. Three-and-twenty I offer for your transport. Return to your native shores, and guard them as we have guarded ours. Are ye contented?”

Amongst those chiefs was a stern priest,—the bishop of the Orcades; he advanced and bent his knee to the king.

“O Lord of England,” said he, “yesterday thou didst conquer the form,—to-day, the soul. And never more may generous Norsemen invade the coast of him who honours the dead and spares the living!”

“Amen!” cried the chiefs, and they all knelt to Harold. The young prince stood a moment irresolute, for his dead father was on the bier before him, and revenge was yet a virtue in the heart of a sea-king. But lifting his eyes to Harold’s, the mild and gentle majesty of the Saxon’s brow was irresistible in its benign command; and stretching his right hand to the king, he raised on high the other, and said aloud, “Faith and friendship with thee and England evermore!”

Then all the chiefs rising, they gathered round the bier, but no hand, in the sight of the conquering foe, lifted the cloth of gold that covered the corpse of the famous king. The bearers of the bier moved on slowly towards the boat; the Norwegians followed with measured funereal steps. And not till the bier was placed on board the royal galley was there

heard the wail of woe; but then it came, loud and deep and dismal, and was followed by a burst of wild song from a surviving Scald.

The Norwegian preparations for departure were soon made, and the ships vouchsafed to their convoy raised anchor, and sailed down the stream. Harold's eye watched the ships from the river banks.

"And there," said he, at last, "there glide the last sails that shall ever bear the devastating raven to the shores of England."

Truly, in that field had been the most signal defeat those warriors, hitherto almost invincible, had known. On that bier lay the last son of Berserker and sea-king; and be it, O Harold, remembered in thine honour, that not by the Norman, but by thee, true-hearted Saxon, was trampled on the English soil the Ravager of the World!¹

"So be it," said Haco, "and so, methinks, will it be. But forget not the descendant of the Norsemen, the Count of Rouen!"

Harold started, and turned to his chiefs. "Sound trumpet, and fall in. To York we march. There re-settle the earldom, collect the spoil, and then back, my men, to the southern shores. Yet first kneel thou, Haco, son of my brother Sweyn: thy deeds were done in the light of Heaven, in the sight of warriors in the open field; so should thine honours find thee! Not with the vain fripperies of Norman knighthood do I deck thee, but make thee one of the elder brotherhood of Minister and Miles. I gird round thy loins mine own baldric of pure silver; I place in thy hand mine own sword of plain steel; and bid thee rise to take place in council and camps amongst the Proceres of England,—Earl of Hertford and Essex. Boy," whispered the king, as he bent over the pale cheek of his nephew, "thank not me. From me the thanks should come. On the day that saw Tostig's crime and his death,

¹ It may be said indeed, that, in the following reign, the Danes under Osbiorn (brother of King Sweyn), sailed up the Humber; but it was to assist the English, not to invade them. They were *bought off* by the Normans,—not conquered.

thou didst purify the name of my brother Sweyn! On to our city of York!"

High banquet was held in York; and, according to the customs of the Saxon monarchs, the king could not absent himself from the Victory Feast of his thegns.

He sat at the head of the board, between his brothers. Morcar, whose departure from the city had deprived him of a share in the battle, had arrived that day with his brother Edwin, whom he had gone to summon to his aid. And though the young earls envied the fame they had not shared, the envy was noble.

Gay and boisterous was the wassail; and lively song, long neglected in England, woke, as it wakes ever, at the breath of Joy and Fame. As if in the days of Alfred, the harp passed from hand to hand; martial and rough the strain beneath the touch of the Anglo-Dane, more refined and thoughtful the lay when it chimed to the voice of the Anglo-Saxon. But the memory of Tostig—all guilty though he was—a brother slain in war with a brother, lay heavy on Harold's soul. Still, so had he schooled and trained himself to live but for England—know no joy and no woe not hers—that by degrees and strong efforts he shook off his gloom. And music, and song, and wine, and blazing lights, and the proud sight of those long lines of valiant men, whose hearts had beat and whose hands had triumphed in the same cause, all aided to link his senses with the gladness of the hour.

And now, as night advanced, Leofwine, who was ever a favourite in the banquet, as Gurth in the council, rose to propose the *drink-hæl*, which carries the most characteristic of our modern social customs to an antiquity so remote, and the roar was hushed at the sight of the young earl's winsome face. With due decorum, he uncovered his head,¹ composed his countenance, and began,—

"Craving forgiveness of my lord the king, and this noble assembly," said Leofwine, "in which are so many from whom what I intend to propose would come with better grace, I would remind you that William, Count of the Normans, medi-

¹ The Saxons sat at meals with their heads covered.

tates a pleasure excursion, of the same nature as our late visitor, Harold Hardrada's."

A scornful laugh ran through the hall.

"And as we English are hospitable folk, and give any man who asks, meat and board for one night, so one day's welcome, methinks, will be all that the Count of the Normans will need at our English hands."

Flushed with the joyous insolence of wine, the wassailers roared applause.

"Wherefore, this *drink-hæl* to William of Rouen! And, to borrow a saying now in every man's lips, and which, I think, our good scops will take care that our children's children shall learn by heart, —since he covets our Saxon soil, 'seven feet of land' in frank pledge to him forever!"

"*Drink-hæl* to William the Norman!" shouted the revelers; and each man, with mocking formality, took off his cap, kissed his hand, and bowed.¹ "*Drink-hæl* to William the Norman!" and the shout rolled from floor to roof, —when, in the midst of the uproar, a man all bedabbled with dust and mire rushed into the hall, rushed through the rows of the banqueters, rushed to the throne-chair of Harold, and cried aloud, "William the Norman is encamped on the shores of Sussex; and with the mightiest armament ever yet seen in England, is ravaging the land far and near!"

¹ Henry.

BOOK XII.

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

CHAPTER I.

IN the heart of the forest-land in which Hilda's abode was situated, a gloomy pool reflected upon its stagnant waters the still shadows of the autumnal foliage. As is common in ancient forests in the neighbourhood of men's wants, the trees were dwarfed in height by repeated loppings, and the boughs sprang from the hollow, gnarled boles of pollard oaks and beeches; the trunks, vast in girth, and covered with mosses and whitening canker-stains, or wreaths of ivy, spoke of the most remote antiquity: but the boughs which their lingering and mutilated life put forth were either thin and feeble with innumerable branchlets, or were centred on some solitary distorted limb which the woodman's axe had spared. The trees thus assumed all manner of crooked, deformed, fantastic shapes, — all betokening age, and all decay; all, in despite of the noiseless solitude around, proclaiming the waste and ravages of man.

The time was that of the first watches of night, when the autumnal moon was brightest and broadest. You might see, on the opposite side of the pool, the antlers of the deer every now and then moving restlessly above the fern in which they had made their couch; and, through the nearer glades, the hares and conies stealing forth to sport or to feed; or the bat, wheeling low, in chase of the forest moth. From the thickest part of the copse came a slow human foot, and Hilda, emerging, paused by the waters of the pool. That serene and stony

calm habitual to her features was gone; sorrow and passion had seized the soul of the Vala, in the midst of its fancied security from the troubles it presumed to foresee for others. The lines of the face were deep and care-worn; age had come on with rapid strides, and the light of the eye was vague and unsettled, as if the lofty reason shook, terrified in its pride, at last.

"Alone, alone!" she murmured, half aloud: "yea, evermore alone! And the grandchild I had reared to be the mother of kings—whose fate, from the cradle, seemed linked with royalty and love; in whom, watching and hoping for, in whom, loving and heeding, methought I lived again the sweet human life—hath gone from my hearth,—forsaken, broken-hearted, withering down to the grave under the shade of the barren cloister! Is mine heart, then, all a lie? Are the gods who led Odin from the Scythian East but the juggling fiends whom the craven Christian abhors? Lo! the Wine Month has come; a few nights more, and the sun which all prophecy foretold should go down on the union of the king and the maid, shall bring round the appointed day: yet Aldyth still lives, and Edith still withers; and War stands side by side with the Church, between the betrothed and the altar. Verily, verily, my spirit hath lost its power, and leaves me bowed, in the awe of night, a feeble, aged, hopeless, childless woman!"

Tears of human weakness rolled down the Vala's cheeks. At that moment, a laugh came from a thing that had seemed like the fallen trunk of a tree, or a trough in which the herdsman waters his cattle, so still and shapeless and undefined it had lain amongst the rank weeds and nightshade and trailing creepers on the marge of the pool. The laugh was low yet fearful to hear.

Slowly the thing moved, and rose, and took the outline of a human form; and the prophetess beheld the witch whose sleep she had disturbed by the Saxon's grave.

"Where is the banner?" said the witch, laying her hand on Hilda's arm, and looking into her face with bleared and rheumy eyes,—"where is the banner thy handmaids were weaving for Harold the Earl? Why didst thou lay aside that labour of love for Harold the King? Hie thee home, and bid

thy maidens ply all night at the work; make it potent with rune and with spell, and with gums of the seid. Take the banner to Harold the King as a marriage-gift; for the day of his birth shall be still the day of his nuptials with Edith the Fair!"

Hilda gazed on the hideous form before her; and so had her soul fallen from its arrogant pride of place, that instead of the scorn with which so foul a pretender to the Great Art had before inspired the King-born Prophetess, her veins tingled with credulous awe.

"Art thou a mortal like myself," she said after a pause, "or one of those beings often seen by the shepherd in mist and rain, driving before them their shadowy flocks,—one of those of whom no man knoweth whether they are of earth or of Helheim; whether they have ever known the lot and conditions of flesh, or are but some dismal race between body and spirit, hateful alike to gods and to men?"

The dreadful hag shook her head, as if refusing to answer the question, and said,—

"Sit we down, sit we down by the dead dull pool, and if thou wouldest be wise as I am, wake up all thy wrongs, fill thyself with hate, and let thy thoughts be curses. Nothing is strong on earth but the Will; and hate to the will is as the iron in the hands of the war-man."

"Ha!" answered Hilda, "then thou art indeed one of the loathsome brood whose magic is born not of the aspiring soul but the fiendlike heart. And between us there is no union. I am of the race of those whom priests and kings reverenced and honoured as the oracles of heaven; and rather let my lore be dimmed and weakened in admitting the humanities of hope and love than be lightened by the glare of the wrath that Lok and Rana bear the children of men."

"What, art thou so base and so doting," said the hag, with fierce contempt, "as to know that another has supplanted thine Edith, that all the schemes of thy life are undone, and yet feel no hate for the man who hath wronged her and thee,—the man who had never been king if thou hadst not breathed into him the ambition of rule? Think, and curse!"

"My curse would wither the heart that is entwined within his," answered Hilda; "and," she added abruptly, as if eager to escape from her own impulses, "didst thou not tell me, even now, that the wrong would be redressed, and his betrothed yet be his bride on the appointed day?"

"Hal! home, then!—home! and weave the charmed woof of the banner, broider it with zimmes and with gold worthy the standard of a king; for I tell thee that where that banner is planted shall Edith clasp with bridal arms her adored. And the hwata thou hast read by the bautastein, and in the temple of the Briton's revengeful gods, shall be fulfilled."

"Dark daughter of Hela," said the prophetess, "whether demon or god hath inspired thee, I hear in my spirit a voice that tells me thou hast pierced to a truth that my lore could not reach. Thou art houseless and poor; I will give wealth to thine age if thou wilt stand with me by the altar of Thor, and let thy galdras unriddle the secrets that have baffled mine own. All foreshown to me hath ever come to pass, but in a sense other than that in which my soul read the rune and the dream, the leaf and the fount, the star and the Scin-læca. My husband slain in his youth; my daughter maddened with woe; her lord murdered on his hearthstone; Sweyn, whom I loved as my child,"—the Vala paused, contending against her own emotions,—"I loved them all," she faltered, clasping her hands; "for them I tasked the future. The future promised fair; I lured them to their doom, and when the doom came, lo! the promise was kept! but how? And now Edith, the last of my race; Harold, the pride of my pride!—speak, thing of Horror and Night, canst thou disentangle the web in which my soul struggles, weak as the fly in the spider's mesh?"

"On the third night from this will I stand with thee by the altar of Thor, and unriddle the rede of my masters, unknown and unguessed, whom thou hast dutifully served. And ere the sun rise, the greatest mystery earth knows shall be bare to thy soul!"

As the witch spoke, a cloud passed over the moon; and before the light broke forth again, the hag had vanished.

There was only seen in the dull pool the water-rat swimming through the rank sedges; only in the forest, the gray wings of the owl, fluttering heavily across the glades; only in the grass, the red eyes of the bloated toad.

Then Hilda went slowly home, and the maids worked all night at the charmed banner. All that night, too, the watch-dogs howled in the yard, through the ruined peristyle,—howled in rage and in fear. And under the lattice of the room in which the maids broidered the banner, and the prophetess muttered her charm, there couched, muttering also, a dark, shapeless thing, at which those dogs howled in rage and in fear.

CHAPTER II.

ALL within the palace of Westminster showed the confusion and dismay of the awful time,—all, at least, save the council-chamber, in which Harold, who had arrived the night before, conferred with his thegns. It was evening: the courtyards and the halls were filled with armed men, and almost with every hour came rider and bode from the Sussex shores. In the corridors the churchmen grouped and whispered, as they had whispered and grouped in the day of King Edward's death. Stigand passed among them, pale and thoughtful. The serge gowns came rustling round the arch-prelate for counsel or courage.

"Shall we go forth with the king's army?" asked a young monk, bolder than the rest, "to animate the host with prayer and hymn?"

"Fool!" said the miserly prelate, "fool! if we do so, and the Norman conquer, what become of our abbacies and convent lands? The duke wars against Harold, not England. If he slay Harold —"

"What then?"

"The Atheling is left us yet. Stay we here and guard the last prince of the House of Cerdic," whispered Stigand, and he swept on.

In the chamber in which Edward had breathed his last, his widowed queen, with Aldyth, her successor, and Githa and some other ladies, waited the decision of the council. By one of the windows stood, clasping each other by the hand, the fair young bride of Gurth and the betrothed of the gay Leofwine. Githa sat alone, bowing her face over her hands,—desolate, mourning for the fate of her traitor son; and the wounds, that the recent and holier death of Thyra had inflicted, bled afresh. And the holy lady of Edward attempted in vain, by pious adjurations, to comfort Aldyth, who, scarcely heeding her, started ever and anon with impatient terror, muttering to herself, "Shall I lose *this* crown too?"

In the council-hall debate waxed warm,—which was the wiser, to meet William at once in the battle-field, or to delay till all the forces Harold might expect, and which he had ordered to be levied in his rapid march from York, could swell his host?

"If we retire before the enemy," said Gurth, "leaving him in a strange land, winter approaching, his forage will fail. He will scarce dare to march upon London; if he does, we shall be better prepared to encounter him. My voice is against resting all on a single battle."

"Is that thy choice?" said Vebba, indignantly. "Not so, I am sure, would have chosen thy father; not so think the Saxons of Kent. The Norman is laying waste all the lands of thy subjects, Lord Harold; living on plunder, as a robber, in the realm of King Alfred. Dost thou think that men will get better heart to fight for their country by hearing that their king shirks from the danger?"

"Thou speakest well and wisely," said Haco; and all eyes turned to the young son of Sweyn, as to one who best knew the character of the hostile army and the skill of its chief. "We have now with us a force flushed with conquest over a foe hitherto deemed invincible. Men who have conquered the Norwegian will not shrink from the Norman. Victory

depends upon ardour more than numbers. Every hour of delay damps the ardour. Are we sure that it will swell the numbers? What I dread most is not the sword of the Norman Duke,—it is his craft. Rely upon it, that if we meet him not soon, he will march straight to London. He will proclaim by the way that he comes not to seize the throne, but to punish Harold, and abide by the Witan, or, perchance, by the word of the Roman pontiff. The terror of his armament, unresisted, will spread like a panic through the land. Many will be decoyed by his false prettexts, many awed by a force that the king dare not meet. If he come in sight of the city, think you that merchants and cheapmen will not be daunted by the thought of pillage and sack? They will be the first to capitulate at the first house which is fired. The city is weak to guard against siege,—its walls long neglected; and in sieges the Normans are famous. Are we so united (the king's rule thus fresh) but what no cabals, no dissensions, will break out amongst ourselves? If the duke come, as come he will, in the name of the Church, may not the churchmen set up some new pretender to the crown,—perchance the child Edgar? And, divided against ourselves, how ingloriously should we fall! Besides, this land, though never before have the links between province and province been drawn so close, hath yet demarcations that make the people selfish. The Northumbrians, I fear, will not stir to aid London, and Mercia will hold aloof from our peril. Grant that William once seize London, all England is broken up and dispirited,—each shire, nay, each town, looking only to itself. Talk of delay as wearing out the strength of the foe! No, it would wear out our own. Little eno', I fear, is yet left in our treasury. If William seize London, that treasury is his, with all the wealth of our burgesses. How should we maintain an army, except by preying on the people, and thus discontenting them? Where guard that army? Where are our forts,—where our mountains? The war of delay suits only a land of rock and defile, or of castle and breastwork. Thegns and warriors, ye have no castles but your breasts of mail. Abandon these, and you are lost."

A general murmur of applause closed this speech of Haco, which, while wise in arguments our historians have overlooked, came home to that noblest reason of brave men, which urges prompt resistance to foul invasion.

Up then rose King Harold.

"I thank you, fellow-Englishmen, for that applause with which ye have greeted mine own thoughts on the lips of Haco. Shall it be said that your king rushed to chase his own brother from the soil of outraged England, yet shrunk from the sword of the Norman stranger? Well indeed might my brave subjects desert my banner if it floated idly over these palace walls while the armed invader pitched his camp in the heart of England. By delay, William's force, whatever it might be, cannot grow less; his cause grows more strong in our craven fears. What his armament may be we rightly know not; the report varies with every messenger, swelling and lessening with the rumours of every hour. Have we not around us now our most stalwart veterans,—the flower of our armies, the most eager spirits, the vanquishers of Hardrada? Thou sayest, Gurth, that all should not be perilled on a single battle. True. Harold should be perilled, but wherefore England? Grant that we win the day: the quicker our despatch, the greater our fame, the more lasting that peace at home and abroad which rests ever its best foundation on the sense of the power which wrong cannot provoke unchastised. Grant that we lose: a loss can be made gain by a king's brave death. Why should not our example rouse and unite all who survive us? Which the nobler example, the one best fitted to protect our country,—the recreant backs of living chiefs, or the glorious dead with their fronts to the foe? Come what may, life or death, at least we will thin the Norman numbers, and heap the barriers of our corpses on the Norman march. At least, we can show to the rest of England how men should defend their native land! And if, as I believe and pray, in every English breast beats a heart like Harold's, what matters though a king should fall?—Freedom is immortal."

He spoke; and forth from his baldric he drew his sword.

Every blade, at that signal, leaped from the sheath; and, in that council-hall at least, in every breast beat the heart of Harold.

CHAPTER III.

THE chiefs dispersed to array their troops for the morrow's march; but Harold and his kinsmen entered the chamber where the women waited the decision of the council, for that, in truth, was to them the parting interview. The king had resolved, after completing all his martial preparations, to pass the night in the Abbey of Waltham; and his brothers lodged, with the troops they commanded, in the city or its suburbs. Haco alone remained with that portion of the army quartered in and around the palace.

They entered the chamber, and in a moment each heart had sought its mate; in the mixed assembly each only conscious of the other. There Gurth bowed his noble head over the weeping face of the young bride that for the last time nestled to his bosom. There, with a smiling lip, but tremulous voice, the gay Leofwine soothed and chided in a breath the maiden he had wooed as the partner for a life that his mirthful spirit made one holiday, snatching kisses from a cheek no longer coy.

But cold was the kiss which Harold pressed on the brow of Aldyth; and with something of disdain, and of bitter remembrance of a nobler love, he comforted a terror which sprang from the thought of self.

"Oh, Harold!" sobbed Aldyth, "be not rashly brave; guard thy life for my sake. Without thee, what am I? Is it even safe for me to rest here? Were it not better to fly to York, or seek refuge with Malcolm the Scot?"

"Within three days at the farthest," answered Harold, "thy brothers will be in London. Abide by their counsel; act as they advise at the news of my victory or my fall."

He paused abruptly, for he heard close beside him the broken voice of Gurth's bride, in answer to her lord.

"Think not of me, beloved; thy whole heart now be England's. And if — if" — her voice failed a moment, but resumed proudly, "why even then thy wife is safe, for she survives not her lord and her land!"

The king left his wife's side, and kissed his brother's bride.

"Noble heart!" he said; "with women like thee for our wives and mothers, England could survive the slaughter of a thousand kings."

He turned, and knelt to Githa. She threw her arms over his broad breast, and wept bitterly.

"Say — say, Harold, that I have not reproached thee for Tostig's death. I have obeyed the last commands of Godwin my lord. I have deemed thee ever right and just; now let me not lose thee, too. They go with thee, all my surviving sons, save the exile Wolnoth,— him whom now I shall never behold again. Oh, Harold! let not mine old age be childless!"

"Mother, dear, dear mother, with these arms round my neck I take new life and new heart. No! never hast thou reproached me for my brother's death,— never for aught which man's first duty enjoined. Murmur not that that duty commands us still. We are the sons, through thee, of royal heroes; through my father, of Saxon freemen. Rejoice that thou hast three sons left, whose arms thou mayest pray God and his saints to prosper, and over whose graves, if they fall, thou shalt shed no tears of shame!"

Then the widow of King Edward, who (the crucifix clasped in her hands) had listened to Harold with lips apart and marble cheeks, could keep down no longer her human woman's heart; she rushed to Harold as he still knelt to Githa,— knelt by his side, and clasped him in her arms with despairing fondness: —

"O brother, brother, whom I have so dearly loved when all other love seemed forbidden me; when he who gave me a throne refused me his heart; when, looking at thy fair promise, listening to thy tender comfort; when, remembering the

days of old, in which thou wert my docile pupil, and we dreamed bright dreams together of happiness and fame to come; when, loving thee methought too well, too much as weak mothers may love a mortal son, I prayed God to detach my heart from earth! — O Harold! now forgive me all my coldness. I shudder at thy resolve. I dread that thou should meet this man, whom an oath hath bound thee to obey. Nay, frown not — I bow to thy will, my brother and my king. I know that thou hast chosen as thy conscience sanctions, as thy duty ordains. But come back,— oh, come back,— thou who, like me" (her voice whispered), "hast sacrificed the household hearth to thy country's altars,— and I will never pray to Heaven to love thee less — my brother, oh, my brother!"

In all the room were then heard but the low sounds of sobs and broken exclamations. All clustered to one spot,— Leofwine and his betrothed, Gurth and his bride, even the selfish Aldyth, ennobled by the contagion of the sublime emotion,— all clustered round Githa, the mother of the three guardians of the fated land, and all knelt before her, by the side of Harold. Suddenly, the widowed queen, the virgin wife of the last heir of Cerdic, rose, and holding on high the sacred rood over those bended heads, said, with devout passion,—

"O Lord of Hosts, We Children of Doubt and Time, trembling in the dark, dare not take to ourselves to question thine unerring will. Sorrow and death, as joy and life, are at the breath of a mercy divine, and a wisdom all-seeing; and 'out of the hours of evil thou drawest, in mystic circle, the eternity of Good. 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' If, O Disposer of events, our human prayers are not adverse to thy pre-judged decrees, protect these lives, the bulwarks of our homes and altars, sons whom the land offers as a sacrifice. May thine angel turn aside the blade, as of old from the heart of Isaac! But if, O Ruler of Nations, in whose sight the ages are as moments, and generations but as sands in the sea, these lives are doomed, may the death expiate their sins, and, shrived on the battle-field, absolve and receive the souls!"

CHAPTER IV.

By the altar of the Abbey Church of Waltham, that night, knelt Edith in prayer for Harold.

She had taken up her abode in a small convent of nuns that adjoined the more famous monastery of Waltham; but she had promised Hilda not to enter on the novitiate until the birthday of Harold had passed. She herself had no longer faith in the omens and prophecies that had deceived her youth and darkened her life; and in the more congenial air of our Holy Church, the spirit, ever so chastened, grew calm and resigned. But the tidings of the Norman's coming, and the king's victorious return to his capital, had reached even that still retreat; and love, which had blent itself with religion, led her steps to that lonely altar. And suddenly, as she there knelt, only lighted by the moon through the high casements, she was startled by the sound of approaching feet and murmuring voices. She rose in alarm; the door of the church was thrown open, torches advanced; and amongst the monks, between Osgood and Ailred, came the king. He had come, that last night before his march, to invoke the prayers of that pious brotherhood; and by the altar he had founded, to pray, himself, that his one sin of faith forfeited and oath abjured might not palsy his arm and weigh on his soul in the hour of his country's need.

Edith stifled the cry that rose to her lips, as the torches fell on the pale and hushed and melancholy face of Harold; and she crept away under the arch of the vast Saxon columns, and into the shade of abutting walls. The monks and the king, intent on their holy office, beheld not that solitary and shrinking form. They approached the altar; and there the king knelt down lowly, and none heard the prayer. But as Osgood held the sacred rood over the bended head of the royal suppliant, the Image on the crucifix (which had been a gift

from Alred the prelate, and was supposed to have belonged of old to Augustine, the first founder of the Saxon Church,—so that by the superstition of the age it was invested with miraculous virtues) bowed itself visibly. Visibly, the pale and ghastly image of the suffering God bowed over the head of the kneeling man; whether the fastenings of the rood were loosened, or from what cause soever,—in the eyes of all the brotherhood, the Image bowed.¹

A thrill of terror froze every heart, save Edith's, too remote to perceive the portent, and save the king's, whom the omen seemed to doom, for his face was buried in his clasped hands. Heavy was his heart, nor needed it other warnings than its own gloom.

Long and silently prayed the king; and when at last he rose, and the monks, though with altered and tremulous voices, began their closing hymn, Edith passed noiselessly along the wall, and, stealing through one of the smaller doors which communicated to the nunnery annexed, gained the solitude of her own chamber. There she stood, benumbed with the strength of her emotions at the sight of Harold thus abruptly presented. How had the fond human heart leaped to meet him! Twice, thus, in the august ceremonials of Religion, secret, shrinking, unwitnessed, had she, his betrothed, she, the partner of his soul, stood aloof to behold him. She had seen him in the hour of his pomp, the crown upon his brow,—seen him in the hour of his peril and agony, that anointed head bowed to the earth. And in the pomp that she could not share, she had exulted; but, oh, now—now,—oh, now that she could have knelt beside that humbled form, and prayed with that voiceless prayer!

The torches flashed in the court below; the church was again deserted; the monks passed in mute procession back to their cloister; but a single man paused, turned aside, and stopped at the gate of the humbler convent; a knocking was heard at the great oaken door, and the watch-dog barked. Edith started, pressed her hand on her heart, and trembled. Steps approached her door, and the abbess, entering, sum-

¹ Palgrave, "Hist. of Anglo-Saxons."

moned her below, to hear the farewell greeting of her cousin the king.

Harold stood in the simple hall of the cloister: a single taper, tall and wan, burned on the oak board. The abbess led Edith by the hand, and at a sign from the king withdrew. So, once more upon earth, the betrothed and divided were alone.

"Edith," said the king, in a voice in which no ear but hers could have detected the struggle, "do not think I have come to disturb thy holy calm, or sinfully revive the memories of the irrevocable past; where once on my breast, in the old fashion of our fathers, I wrote thy name, is written now the name of the mistress that supplants thee. Into Eternity melts the Past; but I could not depart to a field from which there is no retreat — in which, against odds that men say are fearful, I have resolved to set my crown and my life — without once more beholding thee, pure guardian of my happier days! Thy forgiveness for all the sorrow that, in the darkness which surrounds man's hopes and dreams, I have brought on thee (dread return for love so enduring, so generous, and divine!) — thy forgiveness I will not ask. Thou alone perhaps on earth knowest the soul of Harold; and if he hath wronged thee, thou seest alike in the wronger and the wronged but the children of iron Duty, the servants of imperial Heaven. Not thy forgiveness I ask; but — but — Edith, holy maid! angel soul! — thy — thy blessing!" His voice faltered, and he inclined his lofty head as to a saint.

"Oh that I had the power to bless!" exclaimed Edith, mastering her rush of tears with a heroic effort; "and methinks I have the power,— not from virtues of my own, but from all that I owe to thee! The grateful have the power to bless. For what do I not owe to thee,— owe to that very love of which even the grief is sacred? Poor child in the house of the heathen, thy love descended upon me, and in it, the smile of God! In that love my spirit awoke, and was baptized; every thought that has risen from earth, and lost itself in heaven, was breathed into my heart by thee! Thy creature and thy slave, hadst thou tempted me to sin, sin had seemed

hallowed by thy voice; but thou saidst ‘True love is virtue,’ and so I worshipped virtue in loving thee. Strengthened, purified, by thy bright companionship, from thee came the strength to resign thee; from thee the refuge under the wings of God; from thee the firm assurance that our union yet shall be,—not as our poor Hilda dreams, on the perishable earth, but there! oh, there! yonder by the celestial altars, in the land in which all spirits are filled with love. Yes, soul of Harold! there are might and holiness in the blessing the soul thou hast redeemed and reared sheds on thee!”

And so beautiful, so unlike the Beautiful of the common earth, looked the maid as she thus spoke, and laid hands, trembling with no human passion, on that royal head, that could a soul from paradise be made visible, such might be the shape it would wear to a mortal’s eye! Thus for some moments both were silent; and in the silence the gloom vanished from the heart of Harold, and, through a deep and sublime serenity, it rose undaunted to front the future.

No embrace, no farewell kiss, profaned the parting of those pure and noble spirits,—parting on the threshold of the grave. It was only the spirit that clasped the spirit, looking forth from the clay into measureless eternity. Not till the air of night came once more on his brow, and the moonlight rested on the roofs and fanes of the land entrusted to his charge, was the man once more the human hero; not till she was alone in her desolate chamber, and the terrors of the coming battle-field chased the angel from her thoughts, was the maid inspired once more the weeping woman.

A little after sunrise the abbess, who was distantly akin to the House of Godwin, sought Edith, so agitated by her own fear that she did not remark the trouble of her visitor. The supposed miracle of the sacred Image bowing over the kneeling king had spread dismay through the cloisters of both nunnery and abbey; and so intense was the disquietude of the two brothers, Osgood and Ailred, in the simple and grateful affection they bore their royal benefactor, that they had obeyed the impulse of their tender, credulous hearts, and left the monastery with the dawn, intending to follow the king’s

march,¹ and watch and pray near the awful battle-field. Edith listened, and made no reply; the terrors of the abbess infected her; the example of the two monks woke the sole thought which stirred through the nightmare-dream that suspended reason itself; and when, at noon, the abbess again sought the chamber, Edith was gone,—gone, and alone—none knew wherefore, none guessed whither.

All the pomp of the English army burst upon Harold's view, as, in the rising sun, he approached the bridge of the capital. Over that bridge came the stately march,—battle-axe and spear and banner glittering in the ray. And as he drew aside, and the forces defiled before him, the cry of "God save King Harold!" rose with loud acclaim and lusty joy, borne over the waves of the river, startling the echoes in the ruined keape of the Roman, heard in the halls restored by Canute, and chiming, like a chorus, with the chants of the monks by the tomb of Sebba in St. Paul's,—by the tomb of Edward at St. Peter's.

With a brightened face and a kindling eye, the king saluted his lines, and then fell into the ranks towards the rear, where, among the burghers of London and the lithsmen of Middlesex, the immemorial custom of Saxon monarchs placed the kingly banner. And, looking up, he beheld, not his old standard with the Tiger heads and the Cross, but a banner both strange and gorgeous. On a field of gold was the effigies of a Fighting Warrior; and the arms were bedecked in orient pearls, and the borders blazed in the rising sun, with ruby, amethyst, and emerald. While he gazed, wondering, on this dazzling ensign, Haco, who rode beside the standard-bearer, advanced, and gave him a letter.

"Last night," said he, "after thou hadst left the palace, many recruits, chiefly from Hertfordshire and Essex, came in; but the most gallant and stalwart of all, in arms and in stature, were the lithsmen of Hilda. With them came this banner, on which she has lavished the gems that have passed to her hand through long lines of northern ancestors, from Odin, the founder of all northern thrones. So, at least, said the bode of our kinswoman."

¹ Palgrave, "Hist. of Anglo-Saxons."

Harold had already cut the silk round the letter, and was reading its contents. They ran thus: —

“ King of England, I forgive thee the broken heart of my grandchild. They whom the land feeds should defend the land. I send to thee, in tribute, the best fruits that grow in the field and the forest, round the house which my husband took from the bounty of Canute, — stout hearts and strong hands! Descending alike, as do Hilda and Harold (through Githa thy mother) from the Warrior God of the North, whose race never shall fail, take, O defender of the Saxon children of Odin, the banner I have broidered with the gems that the Chief of the Asas bore from the East. Firm as love be thy foot, strong as death be thy hand, under the shade which the banner of Hilda, — under the gleam which the jewels of Odin, — cast on the brows of the King! So Hilda, the daughter of monarchs, greets Harold the leader of men.”

Harold looked up from the letter, and Haco resumed: —

“ Thou canst guess not the cheering effect which this banner, supposed to be charmed, and which the name of Odin alone would suffice to make holy, at least with thy fierce Anglo-Danes, hath already produced through the army.”

“ It is well, Haco,” said Harold, with a smile. “ Let priest add his blessing to Hilda’s charm, and Heaven will pardon any magic that makes more brave the hearts that defend its altars. Now fall we back, for the army must pass beside the hill with the crommell and gravestone; there, be sure, Hilda will be at watch for our march, and we will linger a few moments to thank her somewhat for her banner, yet more justly, methinks, for her men. Are not yon stout fellows all in mail, so tall and so orderly, in advance of the London burghers, Hilda’s aid to our Fyrd?”

“ They are,” answered Haco.

The king backed his steed to accost them with his kingly greeting; and then, with Haco, falling yet farther to the rear, seemed engaged in inspecting the numerous wains, bearing missiles and forage, that always accompanied the march of a Saxon army, and served to strengthen its encampment. But when they came in sight of the hillock by which the great body of the army had preceded them, the king and the

son of Sweyn dismounted, and on foot entered the large circle of the Celtic ruin.

By the side of the Teuton altar they beheld two forms, both perfectly motionless: but one was extended on the ground as in sleep or in death; the other sat beside it, as if watching the corpse, or guarding the slumber. The face of the last was not visible, propped upon the arms which rested on the knees, and hidden by the hands. But in the face of the other, as the two men drew near, they recognized the Danish Prophetess. Death in its dreadest characters was written on that ghastly face; woe and terror, beyond all words to describe, spoke in the haggard brow, the distorted lips, and the wild glazed stare of the open eyes. At the startled cry of the intruders on that dreary silence, the living form moved; and though still leaning its face on its hands, it raised its head; and never countenance of Northern Vampire, cowering by the rifled grave, was more fiendlike and appalling.

"Who and what art thou?" said the king; "and how, thus unhonoured in the air of heaven, lies the corpse of the noble Hilda? Is this the hand of Nature? Haco, Haco, so look the eyes, so set the features, of those whom the horror of ruthless murder slays even before the steel strikes. Speak, hag, art thou dumb?"

"Search the body," answered the witch, "there is no wound! Look to the throat,—no mark of the deadly gripe! I have seen such in my day. There are none on this corpse, I trow; yet thou sayest rightly, horror slew her! Ha, ha! she would know, and she hath known; she would raise the dead and the demon,—she hath raised them; she would read the riddle,—she hath read it. Pale King and dark youth, would ye learn what Hilda saw, eh? eh? Ask her in the Shadow-World where she awaits ye! Ha! ye too would be wise in the future; ye too would climb to heaven through the mysteries of hell. Worms! worms! crawl back to the clay,—to the earth! One such night as the hag ye despise enjoys as her sport and her glee would freeze your veins, and seal the life in your eyeballs, and leave your corpses to terror and wonder, like the carcass that lies at your feet!"

"Ho!" cried the king, stamping his foot. "Hence, Haco; rouse the household; summon hither the handmaids; call henchman and ceorl to guard this foul raven."

Haco obeyed; but when he returned with the shuddering and amazed attendants, the witch was gone, and the king was leaning against the altar with downcast eyes, and a face troubled and dark with thought.

The body of the Vala was borne into the house; and the king, waking from his reverie, bade them send for the priests, and ordered masses for the parted soul. Then kneeling, with pious hand he closed the eyes and smoothed the features, and left his mournful kiss on the icy brow. These offices fulfilled, he took Haco's arm, and leaning on it, returned to the spot on which they had left their steeds. Not evincing surprise or awe,—emotions that seemed unknown to his gloomy, settled, impassible nature,—Haco said calmly, as they descended the knoll,—

"What evil did the hag predict to thee?"

"Haco," answered the king, "yonder, by the shores of Sussex, lies all the future which our eyes now should scan, and our hearts should be firm to meet. These omens and apparitions are but the ghosts of a dead Religion,—spectres sent from the grave of the fearful Heathenesse; they may appall,—but to lure us from our duty. Lo, as we gaze around—the ruins of all the creeds that have made the hearts of men quake with unsubstantial awe—lo, the temple of the Briton! lo, the fane of the Roman! lo, the mouldering altar of our ancestral Thor! Ages past lie wrecked around us in these shattered symbols. A new age hath risen, and a new creed. Keep we to the broad truths before us,—duty here; knowledge comes alone in the Hereafter."

"That Hereafter—is it not near?" murmured Haco.

They mounted in silence; and ere they regained the army paused, by a common impulse, and looked behind. Awful in their desolation rose the temple and the altar! And in Hilda's mysterious death it seemed that their last and lingering Genius—the Genius of the dark and fierce, the warlike and the wizard North—had expired forever. Yet, on the outskirt of

the forest, dusk and shapeless, that witch without a name stood in the shadow, pointing towards them, with outstretched arm, in vague and denouncing menace,—as if, come what may, all change of creed,—be the faith ever so simple, the truth ever so bright and clear,—there is a SUPERSTITION native to that Border-land between the Visible and the Unseen, which will find its priest and its votaries, till the full and crowning splendour of Heaven shall melt every shadow from the world!

CHAPTER V.

ON the broad plain between Pevensey and Hastings, Duke William had arrayed his armaments. In the rear he had built a castle of wood, all the framework of which he had brought with him, and which was to serve as a refuge in case of retreat. His ships he had run into deep water, and scuttled; so that the thought of return, without victory, might be banished from his miscellaneous and multitudinous force. His outposts stretched for miles, keeping watch night and day against surprise. The ground chosen was adapted for all the manœuvres of a cavalry never before paralleled in England, nor perhaps in the world,—almost every horseman a knight, almost every knight fit to be a chief. And on this space William reviewed his army, and there planned and schemed, rehearsed and re-formed, all the stratagems the great day might call forth. But most careful and laborious and minute was he in the manœuvre of a feigned retreat. Not ere the acting of some modern play does the anxious manager more elaborately marshal each man, each look, each gesture, that are to form a picture on which the curtain shall fall amidst deafening plaudits than did the laborious captain appoint each man, and each movement, in his lure to a valiant foe: the attack of the foot, their recoil, their affected panic, their broken exclamations of despair; their retreat, first partial and reluctant, next seemingly hurried and complete, — flying,

but in flight *carefully* confused; then the settled watchword, the lightning rally, the rush of the cavalry from the ambush; the sweep and hem round the pursuing foe, the detachment of levelled spears to cut off the Saxon return to the main force, and the lost ground,—were all directed by the most consummate mastership in the stage play, or *upokrisis*, of war, and seized by the adroitness of practised veterans.

Not now, O Harold! hast thou to contend against the rude heroes of the Norse, with their ancestral strategy unimproved! The civilization of Battle meets thee now!—and all the craft of the Roman guides the manhood of the North.

It was in the midst of such lessons to his foot and his horsemen—spears gleaming, pennons tossing, lines re-forming, steeds backing, wheeling, flying, circling—that William's eye blazed, and his deep voice thundered the thrilling word; when Mallet de Graville, who was in command at one of the outposts, rode up to him at full speed, and said in gasps, as he drew breath,—

“King Harold and his army are advancing furiously. Their object is clearly to come on us unawares.”

“Hold!” said the duke, lifting his hand; and the knights around him halted in their perfect discipline; then after a few brief but distinct orders to Odo, Fitzosborne, and some other of his leading chiefs, he headed a numerous cavalcade of his knights, and rode fast to the outpost which Mallet had left,—to catch sight of the coming foe.

The horsemen cleared the plain,—passed through a wood, mournfully fading into autumnal hues; and, on emerging, they saw the gleam of the Saxon spears rising on the brows of the gentle hills beyond. But even the time, short as it was, that had sufficed to bring William in view of the enemy, had sufficed also, under the orders of his generals, to give to the wide plain of his encampment all the order of a host prepared. And William, having now mounted on a rising ground, turned from the spears on the hill-tops to his own fast forming lines on the plain, and said with a stern smile,—

“Methinks the Saxon usurper, if he be among those on the height of yon hills, will vouchsafe us time to breathe! Saint

Michael gives his crown to our hands, and his corpse to the crow, if he dare to descend."

And so indeed, as the duke with a soldier's eye foresaw from a soldier's skill,—so it proved. The spears rested on the summits. It soon became evident that the English general perceived that here there was no Hardrada to surprise; that the news brought to his ear had exaggerated neither the numbers, nor the arms, nor the discipline of the Norman; and that the battle was not to the bold but to the wary.

"He doth right," said William, musingly; "nor think, O my quens, that we shall find a fool's hot brain under Harold's helmet of iron. How is this broken ground of hillock and valley named in our chart? It is strange that we should have overlooked its strength, and suffered it thus to fall into the hands of the foe. How is it named? Can any of ye remember?"

"A Saxon peasant," said De Graville, "told me that the ground was called Senlac,¹ or Sanglac, or some such name, in their musicless jargon."

"Grammercy!" quoth Grantmesnil, "methinks the name will be familiar eno' hereafter; no jargon seemeth the sound to my ear,—a significant name and ominous,—Sanglac, Sanguelac,—the Lake of Blood."

"Sanguelac!" said the duke, startled; "where have I heard that name before? It must have been between sleeping and waking. Sanguelac, Sanguelac!—truly sayest thou, through a lake of blood we must wade indeed!"

"Yet," said De Graville, "thine astrologer foretold that thou wouldst win the realm without a battle."

"Poor astrologer!" said William, "the ship he sailed in was lost. Ass indeed is he who pretends to warn others, nor sees an inch before his eyes what his own fate will be! Battle shall we have, but not yet. Hark thee, Guillaume, thou hast been guest with this usurper; thou hast seemed to me to have some love for him,—a love natural since thou didst once fight by his side; wilt thou go from me to the Saxon host with

¹ The battle-field of Hastings seems to have been called Senlac before the Conquest, Sanguelac after it.

Hugues Maigrot, the monk, and back the message I shall send?"

The proud and punctilious Norman thrice crossed himself ere he answered, —

"There was a time, Count William, when I should have deemed it honour to hold parley with Harold the brave Earl; but now, with the crown on his head, I hold it shame and disgrace to barter words with a knight unlear and a man forsworn."

"Nathless, thou shalt do me this favour," said William, "for" (and he took the knight somewhat aside) "I cannot disguise from thee that I look anxiously on the chance of battle. Yon men are flushed with new triumph over the greatest warrior Norway ever knew; they will fight on their own soil, and under a chief whom I have studied and read with more care than the comments of Cæsar, and in whom the guilt of perjury cannot blind me to the wit of a great general. If we can yet get our end without battle, large shall be my thanks to thee, and I will hold thine astrologer a man wise, though unhappy."

"Certes," said De Graville, gravely, "it were discourteous to the memory of the star-seer not to make some effort to prove his science a just one. And the Chaldeans —"

"Plague seize the Chaldeans!" muttered the duke. "Ride with me back to the camp, that I may give thee my message, and instruct also the monk."

"De Graville," resumed the duke, as they rode towards the lines, "my meaning is briefly this. I do not think that Harold will accept my offers and resign his crown, but I design to spread dismay, and perhaps revolt, amongst his captains; I wish that they may know that the Church lays its Curse on those who fight against my consecrated banner. I do not ask thee, therefore, to demean thy knighthood by seeking to cajole the usurper; no, — but rather boldly to denounce his perjury and startle his liegemen. Perchance they may compel him to terms, perchance they may desert his banner; at the worst they shall be daunted with full sense of the guilt of his cause."

"Ha, now I comprehend thee, noble Count; and trust me I will speak as Norman and knight should speak."

Meanwhile, Harold, seeing the utter hopelessness of all sudden assault, had seized a general's advantage of the ground he had gained. Occupying the line of hills, he began forthwith to entrench himself behind deep ditches and artful palisades. It is impossible now to stand on that spot, without recognizing the military skill with which the Saxon had taken his post, and formed his precautions. He surrounded the main body of his troops with a perfect breastwork against the charge of the horse. Stakes and strong hurdles interwoven with osier plaits, and protected by deep dikes, served at once to neutralize the effect of that arm in which William was most powerful, and in which Harold almost entirely failed; while the possession of the ground must compel the foe to march, and to charge up hill against all the missiles which the Saxons could pour down from their entrenchments. Aiding, animating, cheering, directing all, while the dikes were fast hollowed, and the breastworks fast rose, the King of England rode his palfrey from line to line, and work to work, when, looking up, he saw Haco leading towards him, up the slopes, a monk, and a warrior whom, by the banderol on his spear and the cross on his shield, he knew to be one of the Norman knighthood.

At that moment Gurth and Leofwine, and those thegns who commanded counties, were thronging round their chief for instructions. The king dismounted, and beckoning them to follow, strode towards the spot on which had just been planted his royal standard. There halting, he said with a grave smile, —

"I perceive that the Norman Count hath sent us his bodes; it is meet that with me, you, the defenders of England, should hear what the Norman saith."

"If he saith aught but prayer for his men to return to Rouen, needless his message, and short our answer," said Vebba, the bluff thegn of Kent.

Meanwhile the monk and the Norman knight drew near, and paused at some short distance, while Haco, advancing, said briefly, —

"These men I found at our outposts; they demand to speak with the king."

"Under his standard the king will hear the Norman invader," replied Harold; "bid them speak."

The same sallow, mournful, ominous countenance, which Harold had before seen in the halls of Westminster, rising deathlike above the serge garb of the Benedict of Caen, now presented itself, and the monk thus spoke,—

"In the name of William, Duke of the Normans in the field, Count of Rouen in the hall, Claimant of all the realms of Anglia, Scotland, and the Walloons, held under Edward his cousin, I come to thee, Harold his liege and earl."

"Change thy titles, or depart," said Harold, fiercely, his brow no longer mild in its majesty, but dark as midnight. "What says William, the Count of the Foreigners, to Harold, King of the Angles, and Basileus of Britain?"

"Protesting against thy assumption, I answer thee thus," said Hugues Maigrot. "First, again he offers thee all Northumbria, up to the realm of the Scottish sub-king, if thou wilt fulfil thy vow, and cede him the crown."

"Already have I answered,—the crown is not mine to give; and my people stand round me in arms to defend the king of their choice. What next?"

"Next, offers William to withdraw his troops from the land, if thou and thy council and chiefs will submit to the arbitrement of our most holy Pontiff, Alexander the Second, and abide by his decision whether thou or my liege have the best right to the throne."

"This, as churchman," said the Abbot of the great Convent of Peterboro' (who, with the Abbot of Hide, had joined the march of Harold, deeming as one the cause of altar and throne), "this as churchman, may I take leave to answer. Never yet hath it been heard in England that the spiritual suzerain of Rome should give us our kings."

"And," said Harold, with a bitter smile, "the Pope hath already summoned me to this trial, as if the laws of England were kept in the rolls of the Vatican! Already, if rightly informed, the Pope hath been pleased to decide that our

Saxon land is the Norman's. I reject a judge without a right to decide; and I mock at a sentence that profanes Heaven in its insult to men. Is this all?"

"One last offer yet remains," replied the monk, sternly. "This knight shall deliver its import. But ere I depart, and thou and thine are rendered up to Vengeance Divine, I speak the words of a mightier chief than William of Rouen. Thus saith his Holiness, with whom rests the power to bind and to loose, to bless and to curse: 'Harold the Perjurer, thou art accursed! On thee and on all who lift hand in thy cause, rests the interdict of the Church. Thou art excommunicated from the family of Christ. On thy land, with its peers and its people, yea, to the beast in the field and the bird in the air, to the seed as the sower, the harvest as the reaper, rests God's anathema! The bull of the Vatican is in the tent of the Norman; the gonfanon of Saint Peter hallows yon armies to the service of Heaven. March on, then: ye march as the Assyrian; and the angel of the Lord awaits ye on the way!'"

At these words, which for the first time apprised the English leaders that their king and kingdom were under the awful ban of excommunication, the thegns and abbots gazed on each other aghast. A visible shudder passed over the whole warlike conclave, save only three, Harold and Gurth and Haco.

The king himself was so moved by indignation at the insolence of the monk, and by scorn at the fulmen, which, resting not alone on his own head, presumed to blast the liberties of a nation, that he strode towards the speaker, and it is even said of him by the Norman chroniclers, that he raised his hand as if to strike the denouncer to the earth.

But Gurth interposed, and with his clear eye serenely shining with virtuous passion, he stood betwixt monk and king.

"O thou," he exclaimed, "with the words of religion on thy lips, and the devices of fraud in thy heart, hide thy front in thy cowl, and slink back to thy master. Heard ye not, thegns and abbots, — heard ye not this bad, false man offer, as if for peace, and as with the desire of justice, that the Pope should arbitrate between your king and the Norman? Yet all the

while the monk knew that the Pope had already predetermined the cause; and had ye fallen into the wile, ye would but have cowered under the verdict of a judgment that has presumed, even before it invoked ye to the trial, to dispose of a free people and an ancient kingdom!"

"It is true, it is true!" cried the thegns, rallying from their first superstitious terror, and, with their plain English sense of justice, revolted at the perfidy which the priest's overtures had concealed. "We will hear no more; away with the Swikebode!"¹

The pale cheek of the monk turned yet paler, he seemed abashed by the storm of resentment he had provoked; and in some fear, perhaps, at the dark faces bent on him, he slunk behind his comrade the knight, who as yet had said nothing, but, his face concealed by his helmet, stood motionless like a steel statue. And, in fact, these two ambassadors, the one in his monk garb, the other in his iron array, were types and representatives of the two forces now brought to bear upon Harold and England,—Chivalry and the Church.

At the momentary discomfiture of the Priest, now stood forth the Warrior; and, throwing back his helmet, so that the whole steel cap rested on the nape of the neck, leaving the haughty face and half-shaven head bare, Mallet de Graville thus spoke:—

"The ban of the Church is against ye, warriors and chiefs of England, but for the crime of one man! Remove it from yourselves: on his single head be the curse and the consequence. Harold, called King of England, failing the two milder offers of my comrade, thus saith from the lips of his knight (once thy guest, thy admirer, and friend), —thus saith William the Norman: 'Though sixty thousand warriors under the banner of the Apostle wait at his beck (and from what I see of thy force, thou canst marshal to thy guilty side scarce a third of the number), yet will Count William lay aside all advantage, save what dwells in strong arm and good cause; and here, in presence of thy thegns, I challenge thee in his name to decide the sway of this realm by single battle. On

¹ Traitor-messenger.

horse and in mail, with sword and with spear, knight to knight, man to man, wilt thou meet William the Norman?"

Before Harold could reply, and listen to the first impulse of a valour which his worst Norman maligner, in the after day of triumphant calumny, never so lied as to impugn, the thegns themselves, almost with one voice, took up the reply.

"No strife between a man and a man shall decide the liberties of thousands!"

"Never!" exclaimed Gurth. "It were an insult to the whole people to regard this as a strife between two chiefs which should wear a crown. When the invader is in our land, the war is with a nation, not a king. And, by the very offer, this Norman Count (who cannot even speak our tongue) shows how little he knows of the laws by which, under our native kings, we have all as great an interest as a king himself in our Fatherland."

"Thou hast heard the answer of England from those lips, Sire de Graville," said Harold; "mine but repeat and sanction it. I will not give the crown to William in lieu for disgrace and an earldom. I will not abide by the arbitrement of a Pope who has dared to affix a curse upon freedom. I will not so violate the principle which in these realms knits king and people, as to arrogate to my single arm the right to dispose of the birthright of the living, and their races unborn; nor will I deprive the meanest soldier under my banner of the joy and the glory to fight for his native land. If William seek me, he shall find me where war is the fiercest, where the corpses of his men lie the thickest on the plains, defending this standard, or rushing on his own. And so, not Monk and Pope, but God in his wisdom, adjudge between us!"

"So be it," said Mallet de Graville, solemnly, and his helmet re-closed over his face. "Look to it, recreant knight, perjured Christian, and usurping King! The bones of the Dead fight against thee."

"And the fleshless hands of the Saints marshal the hosts of the living," said the monk.

And so the messengers turned, without obeisance or salute, and strode silently away.

CHAPTER VI.

THE rest of that day, and the whole of the next, were consumed by both armaments in the completion of their preparations.

William was willing to delay the engagement as long as he could, for he was not without hope that Harold might abandon his formidable position, and become the assailing party; and, moreover, he wished to have full time for his prelates and priests to inflame to the utmost, by their representations of William's moderation in his embassy, and Harold's presumptuous guilt in rejection, the fiery fanaticism of all enlisted under the gonfanon of the Church.

On the other hand, every delay was of advantage to Harold, in giving him leisure to render his entrenchments yet more effectual, and to allow time for such reinforcements as his orders had enjoined, or the patriotism of the country might arouse; but, alas! those reinforcements were scanty and insignificant; a few stragglers in the immediate neighbourhood arrived, but no aid came from London, no indignant country poured forth a swarming population. In fact, the very fame of Harold, and the good fortune that had hitherto attended his arms, contributed to the stupid lethargy of the people. That he who had just subdued the terrible Norsemen, with the mighty Hardrada at their head, should succumb to those dainty "Frenchmen," as they chose to call the Normans, of whom, in their insular ignorance of the Continent, they knew but little, and whom they had seen flying in all directions at the return of Godwin, was a preposterous demand on the imagination.

Nor was this all: in London there had already formed a cabal in favour of the Atheling. The claims of birth can never be so wholly set aside, but what, even for the most unworthy heir of an ancient line, some adherents will be

found. The prudent traders thought it best not to engage actively on behalf of the reigning king, in his present combat with the Norman pretender; a large number of would-be statesmen thought it best for the country to remain for the present neutral. Grant the worst,—grant that Harold were defeated or slain; would it not be wise to reserve their strength to support the Atheling? William might have some personal cause of quarrel against Harold, but he could have none against Edgar; he might depose the son of Godwin, but could he dare to depose the descendant of Cerdic, the natural heir of Edward? There is reason to think that Stigand, and a large party of the Saxon Churchmen, headed this faction.

But the main causes for defection were not in adherence to one chief or to another. They were to be found in selfish inertness, in stubborn conceit, in the long peace, and the enervate superstition which had relaxed the sinews of the old Saxon manhood; in that indifference to things ancient, which contempt for old names and races engendered; that timorous spirit of calculation, which the over-regard for wealth had fostered; which made men averse to leave trade and farm for the perils of the field, and jeopardize their possessions if the foreigner should prevail.

Accustomed already to kings of a foreign race, and having fared well under Canute, there were many who said, "What matters who sits on the throne? the king must be equally bound by our laws." Then too was heard the favourite argument of all slothful minds: "Time enough yet! one battle lost is not England won. Marry, we shall turn out fast eno' if Harold be beaten."

Add to all these causes for apathy and desertion, the haughty jealousies of the several populations not yet wholly fused into one empire. The Northumbrian Danes, untaught even by their recent escape from the Norwegian, regarded with ungrateful coldness a war limited at present to the southern coasts; and the vast territory under Mercia was, with more excuse, equally supine; while their two young earls, too new in their command to have much sway with their subject populations, had

they been in their capitals, had now arrived in London, and there lingered, making head, doubtless, against the intrigues in favour of the Atheling, — so little had Harold's marriage with Aldyth brought him, at the hour of his dreadest need, the power for which happiness had been resigned!

Nor must we put out of account, in summing the causes which at this awful crisis weakened the arm of England, the curse of slavery amongst the theowes, which left the lowest part of the population wholly without interest in the defence of the land. Too late—too late for all but unavailing slaughter, the spirit of the country rose amidst the violated pledges, but under the iron heel, of the Norman Master! Had that spirit put forth all its might for one day with Harold, where had been the centuries of bondage! Oh, shame to the absent — all blessed those present! There was no hope for England out of the scanty lines of the immortal army encamped on the field of Hastings. There, long on earth, and vain vaunts of poor pride, shall be kept the roll of the robber-invaders. In what roll are *your* names, holy Heroes of the Soil? Yes, may the prayer of the Virgin Queen be registered on high; and assoiled of all sin, O ghosts of the glorious Dead, may ye rise from your graves at the trump of the angel; and your names, lost on earth, shine radiant and stainless amidst the Hierarchy of Heaven!

Dull came the shades of evening, and pale through the rolling clouds glimmered the rising stars, when—all prepared, all arrayed—Harold sat with Haco and Gurth, in his tent; and before them stood a man, half French by origin, who had just returned from the Norman camp.

"So thou didst mingle with the men undiscovered?" said the king.

"No, not undiscovered, my lord. I fell in with a knight, whose name I have since heard as that of Mallet de Graville, who wilily seemed to believe in what I stated, and who gave me meat and drink, with debonair courtesy. Then said he abruptly: 'Spy from Harold, thou hast come to see the strength of the Norman. Thou shalt have thy will,—follow me.' Therewith he led me, all startled I own, through the lines; and, O King, I should deem them indeed countless as

the sands, and resistless as the waves, but that, strange as it may seem to thee, I saw more monks than warriors."

"How! thoujestest!" said Gurth, surprised.

"No; for thousands by thousands, they were praying and kneeling; and their heads were all shaven with the tonsure of priests."

"Priests are they not," cried Harold, with his calm smile, "but doughty warriors and dauntless knights."

Then he continued his questions to the spy; and his smile vanished at the accounts, not only of the numbers of the force, but their vast provision of missiles, and the almost incredible proportion of their cavalry.

As soon as the spy had been dismissed, the king turned to his kinsmen.

"What think you?" he said; "shall we judge ourselves of the foe? The night will be dark anon; our steeds are fleet, and not shod with iron like the Normans; the sward noiseless. What think you?"

"A merry conceit," cried the blithe Leofwine. "I should like much to see the boar in his den, ere he taste of my spear-point."

"And I," said Gurth, "do feel so restless a fever in my veins, that I would fain cool it by the night air. Let us go: I know all the ways of the country; for hither have I come often with hawk and hound. But let us wait yet till the night is more hushed and deep."

The clouds had gathered over the whole surface of the skies, and there hung sullen; and the mists were cold and gray on the lower grounds, when the four Saxon chiefs set forth on their secret and perilous enterprise.

"Knights and riders took they none,
Squires and varlets of foot not one;
All unarmed of weapon and weed,
Save the shield and spear and the sword at need."¹

¹ Ne meinent od els chevalier,
Varlet à pie ne eskuier;
Ne nul d'els n'a armes portée,
Forz sol escu, lance, et espée.

Roman de Row, Part ii., v. 12, 126.

Passing their own sentinels, they entered a wood, Gurth leading the way, and catching glimpses, through the irregular path, of the blazing lights, that shone red over the pause of the Norman war.

William had moved on his army to within about two miles from the farthest outpost of the Saxon, and contracted his lines into compact space; the reconnoiterers were thus enabled, by the light of the links and watchfires, to form no inaccurate notion of the formidable foe whom the morrow was to meet. The ground¹ on which they stood was high, and in the deep shadow of the wood; with one of the large dikes common to the Saxon boundaries in front, so that, even if discovered, a barrier not easily passed lay between them and the foe.

In regular lines and streets extended huts of branches for the meaner soldiers, leading up, in serried rows but broad vistas, to the tents of the knights, and the gaudier pavilions of the counts and prelates. There were to be seen the flags of Bretagne and Anjou, of Burgundy, of Flanders, even the ensign of France, which the volunteers from that country had assumed; and right in the midst of this Capital of War, the gorgeous pavilion of William himself, with a dragon of gold before it, surmounting the staff, from which blazed the Papal gonfanon. In every division they heard the anvils of the armourers, the measured tread of the sentries, the neigh and snort of innumerable steeds. And along the lines, between hut and tent, they saw tall shapes passing to and from the forge and smithy, bearing mail and swords and shafts. No sound of revel, no laugh of wassail, was heard in the consecrated camp; all was astir, but with the grave and earnest preparations of thoughtful men. As the four Saxons halted silent, each might have heard, through the remoter din, the other's painful breathing.

¹ Ke d'une angarde ¹ u ils 'estuient,
Cels de l'ost virent, ki pres furent.

Roman de Rou, Part ii., v. 12, 126.

¹ Eminence.

At length, from two tents, placed to the right and left of the duke's pavilion, there came a sweet tinkling sound, as of deep silver bells. At that note there was an evident and universal commotion throughout the armament. The roar of the hammers ceased, and from every green hut and every gray tent swarmed the host. Now, rows of living men lined the camp-streets, leaving still a free, though narrow passage in the midst. And, by the blaze of more than a thousand torches, the Saxons saw processions of priests, in their robes and aubes, with censer and rood, coming down the various avenues. As the priests paused, the warriors knelt; and there was a low murmur as if of confession, and the sign of lifted hands, as if in absolution and blessing. Suddenly, from the outskirts of the camp, and full in sight, emerged, from one of the cross lanes, Odo of Bayeux himself, in his white surplice, and the cross in his right hand. Yea, even to the meanest and lowliest soldiers of the armament, whether taken from honest craft and peaceful calling, or the outpourings of Europe's sinks and sewers, catamarans from the Alps, and cut-throats from the Rhine,—yea, even among the vilest and the meanest, came the anointed brother of the great duke, the haughtiest prelate in Christendom, whose heart even then was fixed on the Pontiff's throne,—there he came, to absolve and to shrive and to bless. And the red watchfires streamed on his proud face and spotless robes, as the Children of Wrath knelt around the Delegate of Peace.

Harold's hand clenched firm on the arm of Gurth, and his old scorn of the monk broke forth in his bitter smile and his muttered words. But Gurth's face was sad and awed.

And now, as the huts and the canvas thus gave up the living, they could indeed behold the enormous disparity of numbers with which it was their doom to contend; and, over those numbers, that dread intensity of zeal, that sublimity of fanaticism, which from one end of that war-town to the other consecrated injustice, gave the heroism of the martyr to ambition, and blended the whisper of lustful avarice with the self-applauses of the saint!

Not a word said the four Saxons. But as the priestly
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procession glided to the farther quarters of the armament, as the soldiers in their neighbourhood disappeared within their lodgments, and the torches moved from them to the more distant vistas of the camp, like lines of retreating stars, Gurth heaved a heavy sigh, and turned his horse's head from the scene.

But scarce had they gained the centre of the wood, than there rose, as from the heart of the armament, a swell of solemn voices. For the night had now come to the third watch,¹ in which, according to the belief of the age, angel and fiend were alike astir, and that church-division of time was marked and hallowed by a monastic hymn.

Inexpressibly grave, solemn, and mournful came the strain through the drooping boughs, and the heavy darkness of the air; and it continued to thrill in the ears of the riders till they had passed the wood, and the cheerful watchfires from their own heights broke upon them to guide their way. They rode rapidly, but still in silence, past their sentries; and, ascending the slopes, where the force lay thick, how different were the sounds that smote them! Round the large fires the men grouped in great circles, with the ale-horns and flagons passing merrily from hand to hand; shouts of drink-hæl and was-hæl, bursts of gay laughter, snatches of old songs, old as the days of Athelstan, — varying, where the Anglo-Danes lay, into the far more animated and kindling poetry of the Pirate North, — still spoke of the heathen time when War was a joy, and Valhalla was the heaven.

“By my faith,” said Leofwine, brightening, “these are sounds and sights that do a man’s heart good, after those doleful ditties, and the long faces of the shavelings. I vow by Saint Alban, that I felt my veins curdling into ice-bolts, when that dirge came through the wood-holt. Hollo, Sexwolf, my tall man, lift us up that full horn of thine, and keep thyself within the pins, Master Wassailer; we must have steady feet and cool heads to-morrow.”

Sexwolf, who, with a band of Harold’s veterans, was at full

¹ Midnight.

carousal, started up at the young earl's greetings, and looked lovingly into his smiling face as he reached him the horn.

"Heed what my brother bids thee, Sexwolf," said Harold, severely; "the hands that draw shafts against us to-morrow will not tremble with the night's wassail."

"Nor ours either, my lord the King," said Sexwolf, boldly; "our heads can bear both drink and blows, — and" — sinking his voice into a whisper — "the rumour runs that the odds are so against us, that I would not, for all thy fair brother's earldoms, have our men other than blithe to-night."

Harold answered not, but moved on; and coming then within full sight of the bold Saxons of Kent, the unmixed sons of the Saxon soil, and the special favourers of the House of Godwin, so affectionate, hearty, and cordial was their joyous shout of his name, that he felt his kingly heart leap within him. Dismounting, he entered the circle, and with the august frankness of a noble chief, nobly popular, gave to all cheering smile and animating word. That done, he said more gravely: "In less than an hour, all wassail must cease,— my bodes will come round; and then sound sleep, my brave merry men, and lusty rising with the lark!"

"As you will, as you will, dear our King," cried Vebba, as spokesman for the soldiers. "Fear us not! Life and death, we are yours."

"Life and death yours, and freedom's," cried the Kent men.

Coming now towards the royal tent beside the standard, the discipline was more perfect, and the hush decorous. For round that standard were both the special body-guard of the king, and the volunteers from London and Middlesex, — men more intelligent than the bulk of the army, and more gravely aware, therefore, of the might of the Norman sword.

Harold entered his tent, and threw himself on his couch, in deep reverie; his brothers and Haco watched him silently. At length Gurth approached; and, with a reverence rare in the familiar intercourse between the two, knelt at his brother's side, and taking Harold's hand in his, looked him full in the face, his eyes moist with tears, and said thus: —

"Oh, Harold! never prayer have I asked of thee that thou hast not granted: grant me this! sorest of all, it may be, to grant, but most fitting of all for me to press. Think not, O beloved brother, O honoured King, think not that it is with slighting reverence that I lay rough hand on the wound deepest at thy heart. But, however surprised or compelled, sure it is that thou didst make oath to William, and upon the relics of saints; avoid this battle,—for I see that thought is now within thy soul; that thought haunted thee in the words of the monk to-day; in the sight of that awful camp to-night,—avoid this battle, and do not thyself stand in arms against the man to whom the oath was pledged!"

"Gurth, Gurth!" exclaimed Harold, pale and writhing.

"We," continued his brother, "we at least have taken no oath, no perjury is charged against us; vainly the thunders of the Vatican are launched on our heads. Our war is just: we but defend our country. Leave us, then, to fight to-morrow; thou retire towards London and raise fresh armies; if we win, the danger is past; if we lose, thou wilt avenge us. And England is not lost while thou survivest."

"Gurth, Gurth!" again exclaimed Harold, in a voice piercing in its pathos of reproach.

"Gurth counsels well," said Haco, abruptly; "there can be no doubt of the wisdom of his words. Let the king's kinsmen lead the troops; let the king himself with his guard hasten to London and ravage and lay waste the country as he retreats by the way;¹ so that even if William beat us, all supplies will fail him; he will be in a land without forage, and victory here will aid him nought, for you, my liege, will have a force equal to his own, ere he can march to the gates of London."

"Faith and troth, the young Haco speaks like a graybeard; he hath not lived in Rouen for nought," quoth Leofwine. "Hear him, my Harold, and leave us to shave the Normans yet more closely than the barber hath already shorn."

¹ This counsel the Norman chronicler ascribes to Gurth, but it is so at variance with the character of that hero, that it is here assigned to the unscrupulous intellect of Haco.

Harold turned ear and eye to each of the speakers, and, as Leofwine closed, he smiled.

"Ye have chid me well, kinsmen, for a thought that had entered into my mind ere ye spake—"

Gurth interrupted the king, and said anxiously, —

"To retreat with the whole army upon London, and refuse to meet the Norman till with numbers more fairly matched?"

"That had been my thought," said Harold, surprised.

"Such for a moment, too, was mine," said Gurth, sadly; "but it is too late. Such a measure, now, would have all the disgrace of flight, and bring none of the profits of retreat. The ban of the Church would get wind; our priests, awed and alarmed, might wield it against us; the whole population would be damped and disheartened; rivals to the crown might start up; the realm be divided. No, it is impossible!"

"Impossible," said Harold, calmly. "And if the army cannot retreat, of all men to stand firm, surely it is the captain and the king. *I*, Gurth, leave others to dare the fate from which I fly! *I* give weight to the impious curse of the Pope, by shrinking from its idle blast! *I* confirm and ratify the oath, from which all law must absolve me, by forsaking the cause of the land which I purify myself when I guard! *I* leave to others the agony of the martyrdom or the glory of the conquest! Gurth, thou art more cruel than the Norman! And *I*, son of Sweyn, *I* ravage the land committed to my charge, and despoil the fields which I cannot keep! Oh, Haco, that indeed were to be the traitor and the recreant! No, whatever the sin of my oath, never will I believe that Heaven can punish millions for the error of one man. Let the bones of the dead war against us; in life, they were men like ourselves, and no saints in the calendar so holy as the freemen who fight for their hearths and their altars. Nor do I see aught to alarm us even in these grave human odds. We have but to keep fast these entrenchments, — preserve, man by man, our invincible line, — and the waves will but split on our rock: ere the sun set to-morrow, we shall see the tide ebb, leaving, as waifs, but the dead of the baffled invader.

"Fare ye well, loving kinsmen; kiss me, my brothers; kiss

me on the cheek, my Haco. Go now to your tents. Sleep in peace, and wake with the trumpet to the gladness of noble war!"

Slowly the earls left the king, — slowest of all the lingering Gurth; and when all were gone, and Harold was alone, he threw round a rapid, troubled glance, and then, hurrying to the simple imageless crucifix that stood on its pedestal at the farther end of the tent, he fell on his knees, and faltered out, while his breast heaved, and his frame shook with the travail of his passion, —

"If my sin be beyond a pardon, my oath without recall, on me, on me, O Lord of Hosts, on me alone the doom. Not on them, not on them, — not on England!"

CHAPTER VII.

ON the 14th of October, 1066, the day of Saint Calixtus, the Norman force was drawn out in battle array. Mass had been said; Odo and the Bishop of Coutance had blessed the troops, and received their vow never more to eat flesh on the anniversary of that day. And Odo had mounted his snow-white charger, and already drawn up the cavalry against the coming of his brother the duke. The army was marshalled in three great divisions.

Roger de Montgommery and William Fitzosborne led the first, and with them were the forces from Picardy and the countship of Boulogne, and the fiery Franks, Geoffric Martel and the German Hugues (a prince of fame); Aimeri, Lord of Thouars, and the sons of Alain Fergant, Duke of Bretagne, led the second, which comprised the main bulk of the allies from Bretagne and Maine and Poitou. But both these divisions were intermixed with Normans, under their own special Norman chiefs.

The third section embraced the flower of martial Europe, the most renowned of the Norman race; whether those knights

bore the French titles into which their ancestral Scandinavian names had been transformed,— Sires of Beaufou and Harcourt, Abbeville, and De Molun, Montfichet, Grantmesnil, Lacie, D'Aincourt, and D'Asnieres,— or whether, still preserving, amidst their daintier titles, the old names that had scattered dismay through the seas of the Baltic,— Osborne and Tonstain, Mallet and Bulver, Brand and Bruse.¹ And over this division presided Duke William. Here was the main body of the matchless cavalry, to which, however, orders were given to support either of the other sections, as need might demand. And with this body were also the reserve; for it is curious to notice, that William's strategy resembled in much that of the last great Invader of Nations,— relying first upon the effect of the charge; secondly, upon a vast reserve brought to bear at the exact moment on the weakest point of the foe.

All the horsemen were in complete link or net mail,² armed with spears and strong swords, and long, pear-shaped shields, with the device either of a cross or a dragon.³ The archers, on whom William greatly relied, were numerous in all three of the corps,⁴ were armed more lightly,— helms on their heads, but with leather or quilted breastplates, and “panels,” or gaiters, for the lower limbs.

But before the chiefs and captains rode to their several posts, they assembled round William, whom Fitzosborne had

¹ Osborne (Asbjorn), one of the most common of Danish and Norwegian names; Tonstain, Toustain, or Tostain, the same as Tosti, or Tostig,— Danish (Harold's brother is called Tostain or Toustain, in the Norman chronicles); Brand, a name common to Dane or Norwegian. Bulmer is a Norwegian name, and so is Bulver, or Bolvär,— which is, indeed, so purely Scandinavian that it is one of the warlike names given to Odin himself by the Norse Scalds. Bulverhithe still commemorates the landing of a Norwegian son of the war-god. Bruce, the ancestor of the deathless Scot, also bears in that name, more illustrious than all, the proof of his Scandinavian birth.

² This mail appears in that age to have been sewn upon linen or cloth. In the later age of the Crusaders, it was more artful, and the links supported each other, without being attached to any other material.

³ Bayeux tapestry.

⁴ The cross-bow is not to be seen in the Bayeux tapestry; the Norman bows are not long.

called betimes, and who had not yet endued his heavy mail, that all men might see suspended from his throat certain relics chosen out of those on which Harold had pledged his fatal oath. Standing on an eminence in front of all his lines, the consecrated banner behind him, and Bayard, his Spanish *destrier*, held by his squires at his side, the duke conversed cheerily with his barons, often pointing to the relics. Then, in sight of all, he put on his mail, and, by the haste of his squires, the back-piece was presented to him first. The superstitious Normans recoiled as at an evil omen.

"Tut!" said the ready chief; "not in omens and divinations, but in God, trust I! Yet, good omen indeed is this, and one that may give heart to the most doubtful; for it betokens that the last shall be first,— the dukedom a kingdom, the count a king! Ho there, Rou de Terni, as Hereditary Standard-bearer take thy right, and hold fast to yon holy gonfanon."

"*Grant merci,*" said De Terni, "not to-day shall a standard be borne by me, for I shall have need of my right arm for my sword, and my left for my charger's rein and my trusty shield."

"Thou sayest right, and we can ill spare such a warrior. Gautier Giffart, Sire de Longueville, to thee is the gonfanon."

"*Beau Sire,*" answered Gautier, "*par Dex, Merci.* But my head is gray and my arm weak; and the little strength left me I would spend in smiting the English at the head of my men."

"*Per la resplendar Dë,*" cried William, frowning, "do ye think, my proud vavasours, to fail me in this great need?"

"Nay," said Gautier; "but I have a great host of chevaliers and paid soldiers, and without the old man at their head will they fight as well?"

"Then approach thou, Tonstain le Blanc, son of Rou," said William; "and be thine the charge of a standard that shall wave ere nightfall over the brows of thy—*King!*" A young knight, tall and strong as his Danish ancestor, stepped forth, and laid gripe on the banner.

Then William, now completely armed save his helmet,

sprang at one bound on his steed. A shout of admiration rang from the quens and knights.

"Saw ye ever such *beau rei?*"¹ said the Vicomte de Thouars.

The shout was caught by the lines, and echoed far, wide, and deep through the armament, as in all his singular majesty of brow and mien, William rode forth: lifting his hand, the shout hushed, and thus he spoke, "loud as a trumpet with a silver sound":—

"Normans and soldiers, long renowned in the lips of men, and now hallowed by the blessing of the Church! I have not brought you over the wide seas for my cause alone,— what I gain, ye gain. If I take the land, you will share it. Fight your best, and spare not; no retreat, and no quarter! I am not come here for my cause alone, but to avenge our whole nation for the felonies of yonder English. They butchered our kinsmen the Danes, on the night of Saint Brice; they murdered Alfred, the brother of their last king, and decimated the Normans who were with him. Yonder they stand,— malefactors that await their doom! and ye the dooms-men! Never, even in a good cause, were yon English illustrious for warlike temper and martial glory.² Remember how easily the Danes subdued them! Are ye less than Danes, or I than Canute? By victory ye obtain vengeance, glory, honours, lands, spoil,— ay, spoil beyond your wildest dreams. By defeat,— yea, even but by loss of ground, ye are given up to the sword! Escape there is not, for the ships are useless. Before you the foe, behind you the ocean. Normans, remember the feats of your countrymen in Sicily! Behold a Sicily more rich! Lordships and lands to the living,— glory and salvation to those who die under the gonfanon of the Church! On, to the cry of the Norman warrior,— the cry before which have fled so often the prowest Paladins of Burgundy and France,— 'Notre Dame et Dex aide!' "³

Meanwhile, no less vigilant, and in his own strategy no less skilful, Harold had marshalled his men. He formed two divisions,— those in front of the entrenchments, those within

¹ Roman de Rou.

² William of Poitiers.

³ *Dieu nous aide.*

it. At the first, the men of Kent, as from time immemorial, claimed the honour of the van, under "the Pale Charger," — famous banner of Hengist. This force was drawn up in the form of the Anglo-Danish wedge; the foremost lines in the triangle all in heavy mail, armed with their great axes, and covered by their immense shields. Behind these lines, in the interior of the wedge, were the archers, protected by the front rows of the heavy armed; while the few horsemen — few indeed compared with the Norman cavalry — were artfully disposed where they could best harass and distract the formidable chivalry with which they were instructed to skirmish, and not peril actual encounter. Other bodies of the light armed, slingers, javelin-throwers, and archers, were planted in spots carefully selected, according as they were protected by trees, bushwood, and dikes. The Northumbrians (that is, all the warlike population north the Humber, including Yorkshire, Westmoreland, Cumberland, etc.) were, for their present shame and future ruin, absent from that field, save, indeed, a few who had joined Harold in his march to London; but there were the mixed races of Hertfordshire and Essex, with the pure Saxons of Sussex and Surrey, and a large body of the sturdy Anglo-Danes from Lincolnshire, Ely, and Norfolk. Men, too, there were, half of old British blood, from Dorset, Somerset, and Gloucester.

And all were marshalled according to those touching and pathetic tactics which speak of a nation more accustomed to defend than to aggrieve. To that field the head of each family led his sons and kinsfolk; every ten families (or tything) were united under their own chosen captain. Every ten of these tithings had, again, some loftier chief, dear to the populace in peace; and so on the holy circle spread from household, hamlet, town,— till, all combined as one county under one earl, the warriors fought under the eyes of their own kinsfolk, friends, neighbours, chosen chiefs! What wonder that they were brave!

The second division comprised Harold's house-carles, or body-guard, the veterans especially attached to his family, the companions of his successful wars, a select band of the

martial East-Anglians, the soldiers supplied by London and Middlesex, and who, both in arms, discipline, martial temper, and athletic habits, ranked high among the most stalwart of the troops, mixed, as their descent was, from the warlike Dane and the sturdy Saxon. In this division, too, was comprised the reserve. And it was all encompassed by the palisades and breastworks, to which were but three sorties, whence the defenders might sally, or through which at need the vanguard might secure a retreat. All the heavy armed had mail and shields similar to the Normans, though somewhat less heavy; the light armed had, some tunics of quilted linen, some of hide; helmets of the last material, spears, javelins, swords, and clubs. But the main arm of the host was in the great shield, and the great axe wielded by men larger in stature and stronger of muscle than the majority of the Normans, whose physical race had deteriorated, partly by inter-marriage with the more delicate Frank, partly by the haughty disdain of foot exercise.

Mounting a swift and light steed, intended not for encounter (for it was the custom of English kings to fight on foot, in token that where they fought there was no retreat), but to bear the rider rapidly from line to line,¹ King Harold rode to the front of the vanguard, his brothers by his side. His head, like his great foe's, was bare; nor could there be a more striking contrast than that of the broad unwrinkled brow of the Saxon, with his fair locks, the sign of royalty and freedom, parted and falling over the collar of mail, the clear and steadfast eye of blue, the cheek somewhat hollowed by kingly cares, but flushed now with manly pride, the form stalwart and erect, but spare in its graceful symmetry, and void of all that theoric pomp of bearing which was assumed by William,—no greater contrast could there be than that which the simple earnest Hero-king presented, to the brow furrowed with harsh ire and politic wile, the shaven hair of monastic affectation, the dark, sparkling tiger eye, and the vast proportions that awed the gaze in the port and form of

¹ Thus, when at the battle of Barnet Earl Warwick, the king-maker, slew his horse and fought on foot, he followed the old traditional custom of Saxon chiefs.

the imperious Norman. Deep and loud and hearty as the shout with which his armaments had welcomed William was that which now greeted the king of the English host; and clear and full, and practised in the storm of popular assemblies, went his voice down the listening lines.

"This day, O friends and Englishmen, sons of our common land,—this day ye fight for liberty. The Count of the Normans hath, I know, a mighty army; I disguise not its strength. That army he hath collected together, by promising to each man a share in the spoils of England. Already, in his court and his camp, he hath parcelled out the lands of this kingdom; and fierce are the robbers who fight for the hope of plunder! But he cannot offer to his greatest chief boons nobler than those I offer to my meanest freeman,—liberty and right and law in the soil of his fathers! Ye have heard of the miseries endured in the old time under the Dane, but they were slight indeed to those which ye may expect from the Norman. The Dane was kindred to us in language and in law, and who now can tell Saxon from Dane? But yon men would rule ye in a language ye know not, by a law that claims the crown as the right of the sword, and divides the land among the hirelings of an army. We baptized the Dane, and the Church tamed his fierce soul into peace; but yon men make the Church itself their ally, and march to carnage under the banner profaned to the foulest of human wrongs! Outscourings of all nations, they come against you. Ye fight as brothers under the eyes of your fathers and chosen chiefs; ye fight for the women ye would save from the ravisher; ye fight for the children ye would guard from eternal bondage; ye fight for the altars which yon banner now darkens! Foreign priest is a tyrant as ruthless and stern as ye shall find foreign baron and king! Let no man dream of retreat; every inch of ground that ye yield is the soil of your native land. For me, on this field I peril all. Think that mine eye is upon you wherever ye are. If a line waver or shrink, ye shall hear in the midst the voice of your king. Hold fast to your ranks; remember, such amongst you as fought with me against Hardrada,—remember that it was not till the Norsemen lost, by rash sallies, their serried array, that our arms prevailed

against them. Be warned by their fatal error, break not the form of the battle; and I tell you, on the faith of a soldier who never yet hath left field without victory, that ye cannot be beaten. While I speak, the winds swell the sails of the Norse ships, bearing home the corpse of Hardrada. Accomplish this day the last triumph of England; add to these hills a new mount of the conquered dead! And when, in far times and strange lands, scald and scop shall praise the brave man for some valiant deed wrought in some holy cause, they shall say, ‘He was brave as those who fought by the side of Harold, and swept from the sward of England the hosts of the haughty Norman.’”

Scarcely had the rapturous hurrahs of the Saxons closed on this speech, when full in sight, northwest of Hastings, came the first division of the Invader.

Harold remained gazing at them, and not seeing the other sections in movement, said to Gurth, “If these are all that they venture out, the day is ours.”

“Look yonder!” said the sombre Haco, and he pointed to the long array that now gleamed from the wood through which the Saxon kinsmen had passed the night before; and scarcely were these cohorts in view, than lo! from a third quarter advanced the glittering knighthood under the duke. All three divisions came on in simultaneous assault, two on either wing of the Saxon vanguard, the third (the Norman) towards the entrenchments.

In the midst of the duke’s cohort was the sacred gonfanon, and in front of it and of the whole line, rode a strange warrior of gigantic height. And as he rode, the warrior sang,—

“Chanting loud the lusty strain
Of Roland and of Charlemain,
And the dead who, deathless all,
Fell at famous Roncesval.”¹

¹ Devant li Dus about cantant
De Karlemaine è de Rollant,
Ed 'Olever e des Vassalls,
Ki morurent en Ronchevals.

Roman de Rou, Part ii. l. 13, 151.

Much research has been made by French antiquaries to discover the old Chant de Ronald, but in vain.

And the knights, no longer singing hymn and litany, swelled, hoarse through their helmets, the martial chorus. This warrior, in front of the duke and the horsemen, seemed beside himself with the joy of battle. As he rode, and as he chanted, he threw up his sword in the air like a gleeman, catching it nimbly as it fell,¹ and flourishing it wildly, till, as if unable to restrain his fierce exhilaration, he fairly put spurs to his horse, and, dashing forward to the very front of a detachment of Saxon riders, shouted,—

“A Taillefer! a Taillefer!” and by voice and gesture challenged forth some one to single combat.

A fiery young thegn, who knew the Romance tongue, started forth and crossed swords with the poet; but by what seemed rather a juggler’s sleight of hand than a knight’s fair fence, Taillefer, again throwing up and catching his sword with incredible rapidity, shone the unhappy Saxon from the helm to the chine, and riding over his corpse, shouting and laughing, he again renewed his challenge. A second rode forth and shared the same fate. The rest of the English horsemen stared at each other aghast; the shouting, singing, juggling giant seemed to them not knight, but demon; and that single incident, preliminary to all other battle, in sight of the whole field, might have sufficed to damp the ardour of the English, had not Leofwine, who had been despatched by the king with a message to the entrenchments, come in front of the detachment; and his gay spirit, roused and stung by the insolence of the Norman, and the evident dismay of the Saxon riders, without thought of his graver duties, he spurred his light half-mailed steed to the Norman giant; and, not even drawing his sword, but with his spear raised over his head, and his form covered by his shield, he cried in Romance tongue, “Go and chant to the foul fiend, O croaking minstrel!” Taillefer rushed forward, his sword shivered on the Saxon shield, and in the same moment he fell a corpse under the hoofs of his steed, transfix'd by the Saxon spear.

A cry of woe, in which even William (who, proud of his poet’s achievements, had pressed to the foremost line to see

¹ W. Pict., Chron. de Nor.



Frank T. Merrill

this new encounter) joined his deep voice, wailed through the Norman ranks; while Leofwine rode deliberately towards them, halted a moment, and then flung his spear in the midst with so deadly an aim, that a young knight, within two of William, reeled on his saddle, groaned, and fell.

"How like ye, O Normans, the Saxon gleemen!" said Leofwine, as he turned slowly, regained the detachment, and bade them heed carefully the orders they had received,—namely, to avoid the direct charge of the Norman horse, but to take every occasion to harass and divert the stragglers; and then blithely singing a Saxon stave, as if inspired by Norman minstrelsy, he rode into the entrenchments.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE two brethren of Waltham, Osgood and Ailred, had arrived a little after daybreak at the spot in which, about half a mile to the rear of Harold's palisades, the beasts of burden that had borne the heavy arms, missiles, luggage, and forage of the Saxon march, were placed in and about the fenced yards of a farm. And many human beings, of both sexes and various ranks, were there assembled, some in breathless expectation, some in careless talk, some in fervent prayer.

The master of the farm, his sons, and the able-bodied ceorls in his employ, had joined the forces of the king, under Gurth, as earl of the county.¹ But many aged theowes, past military service, and young children, grouped around: the first, stolid and indifferent,—the last, prattling, curious, lively, gay. There, too, were the wives of some of the soldiers, who, as common in Saxon expeditions, had followed their husbands

¹ For, as Sir F. Palgrave shrewdly conjectures, upon the dismemberment of the vast earldom of Wessex, on Harold's accession to the throne, that portion of it comprising Sussex (the old government of his grandfather Wolnoth) seems to have been assigned to Gurth.

to the field; and there, too, were the ladies of many a Hlaford in the neighbouring district, who, no less true to their mates than the wives of humbler men, were drawn by their English hearts to the fatal spot. A small wooden chapel, half decayed, stood a little behind, with its doors wide open, a sanctuary in case of need; and the interior was thronged with kneeling suppliants.

The two monks joined, with pious gladness, some of their sacred calling, who were leaning over the low wall, and straining their eyes towards the bristling field. A little apart from them, and from all, stood a female,—the hood drawn over her face, silent in her unknown thoughts.

By and by, as the march of the Norman multitude sounded hollow, and the trumps and the fifes and the shouts rolled on through the air in many a stormy peal, the two abbots in the Saxon camp, with their attendant monks, came riding towards the farm from the entrenchments.

The groups gathered round these new comers in haste and eagerness.

“The battle hath begun,” said the Abbot of Hide, gravely. “Pray God for England, for never was its people in peril so great from man.”

The female started and shuddered at those words.

“And the king, the king,” she cried, in a sudden and thrilling voice; “where is he,—the king?”

“Daughter,” said the abbot, “the king’s post is by his standard; but I left him in the van of his troops. Where he may be now I know not,—wherever the foe presses sorest.”

Then dismounting, the abbots entered the yard, to be accosted instantly by all the wives, who deemed, poor souls, that the holy men must, throughout all the field, have seen *their* lords; for each felt as if God’s world hung but on the single life in which each pale trembler lived.

With all their faults of ignorance and superstition, the Saxon churchmen loved their flocks; and the good abbots gave what comfort was in their power, and then passed into the chapel, where all who could find room followed them.

The war now raged.

The two divisions of the invading army that included the auxiliaries had sought in vain to surround the English vanguard, and take it in the rear: that noble phalanx had no rear. Deepest and strongest at the base of the triangle, everywhere a front opposed the foe; shields formed a rampart against the dart, spears a palisade against the horse. While that vanguard maintained its ground, William could not pierce to the entrenchments, the strength of which, however, he was enabled to perceive. He now changed his tactics, joined his knighthood to the other sections, threw his hosts rapidly into many wings, and leaving broad spaces between his archers,—who continued their fiery hail,—ordered his heavy-armed foot to advance on all sides upon the wedge, and break its ranks for the awaiting charge of his horse.

Harold, still in the centre of the vanguard, amidst the men of Kent, continued to animate them all with voice and hand; and, as the Normans now closed in, he flung himself from his steed, and strode on foot, with his mighty battle-axe, to the spot where the rush was dreadest.

Now came the shock, the fight hand-to-hand: spear and lance were thrown aside, axe and sword rose and shone. But before the close-serried lines of the English, with their physical strength, and veteran practice in their own special arm, the Norman foot were mowed as by the scythe. In vain, in the intervals, thundered the repeated charges of the fiery knights; in vain, throughout all, came the shaft and the bolt.

Animated by the presence of their king, fighting amongst them as a simple soldier, but with his eye ever quick to foresee, his voice ever prompt to warn, the men of Kent swerved not a foot from their indomitable ranks. The Norman infantry wavered and gave way; on, step by step, still unbroken in array, pressed the English. And their cry, “Out! out! Holy Crosse!” rose high above the flagging sound of “Ha Rou! Ha Rou! Notre Dame!”

“*Per la resplendar D^e!*” cried William. “Our soldiers are but women in the garb of Normans. Ho, spears to the rescue! With me to the charge, Sires D’Aumale and De Littain! with

me, gallant Bruse, and De Mortain! with me, De Graville and Grantmesnil! Dex aide! Notre Dame!" And heading his prowest knights, William came, as a thunderbolt, on the bills and shields. Harold, who scarce a minute before had been in a remoter rank, was already at the brunt of that charge. At his word down knelt the foremost line, leaving nought but their shields and their spear-points against the horse; while behind them, the axe in both hands, bent forward the soldiery in the second rank, to smite and to crush; and, from the core of the wedge, poured the shafts of the archers. Down rolled in the dust half the charge of those knights. Bruse reeled on his saddle; the dread right hand of D'Aumale fell lopped by the axe; De Graville, hurled from his horse, rolled at the feet of Harold; and William, borne by his great steed and his colossal strength into the third rank, there dealt, right and left, the fierce strokes of his iron club, till he felt his horse sinking under him, and had scarcely time to back from the foe, scarcely time to get beyond reach of their weapons, ere the Spanish *destrier*, frightfully gashed through its strong mail, fell dead on the plain. His knights swept round him. Twenty barons leaped from selle to yield him their chargers. He chose the one nearest to hand, sprang to foot and to stirrup, and rode back to his lines. Meanwhile De Graville's casque, its strings broken by the shock, had fallen off, and as Harold was about to strike, he recognized his guest.

Holding up his hand to keep off the press of his men, the generous king said briefly, "Rise and retreat! — no time on this field for captor and captive. He whom thou hast called recreant knight has been Saxon host. Thou hast fought by his side, thou shalt not die by his hand! — Go."

Not a word spoke De Graville; but his dark eye dwelt one minute with mingled pity and reverence on the king; then rising, he turned away; and slowly, as if he disdained to fly, strode back over the corpses of his countrymen.

"Stay, all hands!" cried the king to his archers; "yon man hath tasted our salt, and done us good service of old. He hath paid his *weregeld*."

Not a shaft was discharged.

Meanwhile, the Norman infantry, who had been before recoiling, no sooner saw their duke (whom they recognized by his steed and equipment) fall on the ground, than, setting up a shout, "The duke is dead!" they fairly turned round, and fled fast in disorder.

The fortune of the day was now well nigh turned in favour of the Saxons; and the confusion of the Normans, as the cry of "The duke is dead!" reached and circled round the host, would have been irrecoverable, had Harold possessed a cavalry fit to press the advantage gained, or had not William himself rushed into the midst of the fugitives, throwing his helmet back on his neck, showing his face, all animated with fierce valour and disdainful wrath, while he cried aloud,—

"I live, ye varlets! Behold the face of a chief who never yet forgave coward! Ay, tremble more at me than at yon English, doomed and accursed as they be! Ye Normans, ye! I blush for you!" and striking the foremost in the retreat with the flat of his sword, chiding, stimulating, threatening, promising in a breath, he succeeded in staying the flight, reforming the lines, and dispelling the general panic. Then, as he joined his own chosen knights, and surveyed the field, he beheld an opening which the advanced position of the Saxon vanguard had left, and by which his knights might gain the entrenchments. He mused a moment, his face still bare, and brightening, as he mused. Looking round him, he saw Mallet de Graville, who had remounted, and said, shortly,—

"*Pardex*, dear knight, we thought you already with Saint Michael! — joy, that you live yet to be an English earl. Look you, ride to Fitzosborne with the signal-word, 'Li Hardiz passent avant!' Off, and quick."

De Graville bowed, and darted across the plain.

"Now, my quens and chevaliers," said William, gayly, as he closed his helmet, and took from his squire another spear, — "now, I shall give ye the day's great pastime. Pass the word, Sire de Tancarville, to every horseman — 'Charge! — to the Standard!'"

The word passed, the steeds bounded, and the whole force of William's knighthood, scouring the plain to the rear of the Saxon vanguard, made for the entrenchments.

At that sight, Harold, divining the object, and seeing this new and more urgent demand on his presence, halted the battalions over which he had presided, and, yielding the command to Leofwine, once more briefly but strenuously enjoined the troops to heed well their leaders, and on no account to break the wedge, in the form of which lay their whole strength, both against the cavalry and the greater number of the foe. Then mounting his horse, and attended only by Haco, he spurred across the plain, in the opposite direction to that taken by the Normans. In doing so, he was forced to make a considerable circuit towards the rear of the entrenchment, and the farm, with its watchful groups, came in sight. He distinguished the garbs of the women, and Haco said to him,—

“There wait the wives, to welcome the living victors.”

“Or search their lords among the dead!” answered Harold.
“Who, Haco, if we fall, will search for us?”

As the word left his lips, he saw, under a lonely thorn-tree, and scarce out of bowshot from the entrenchments, a woman seated. The king looked hard at the bended, hooded form.

“Poor wretch!” he murmured, “her heart is in the battle!” And he shouted aloud, “Farther off! farther off! The war rushes hitherward!”

At the sound of that voice the woman rose, stretched her arms, and sprang forward. But the Saxon chiefs had already turned their faces towards the neighbouring ingress into the ramparts, and beheld not her movement, while the tramp of rushing chargers, the shout and the roar of clashing war, drowned the wail of her feeble cry.

“I have heard him again, again!” murmured the woman, “God be praised!” and she re-seated herself quietly under the lonely thorn.

As Harold and Haco sprang to their feet within the entrenchments, the shout of “the king! the king! Holy Crosse!” came in time to rally the force at the farther end, now undergoing the full storm of the Norman chivalry.

The willow ramparts were already rent and hewed beneath the hoofs of horses and the clash of swords; and the sharp

points on the frontals of the Norman *destriers* were already gleaming within the entrenchments, when Harold arrived at the brunt of action. The tide was then turned; not one of those rash riders left the entrenchments they had gained; steel and horse alike went down beneath the ponderous battle-axes; and William, again foiled and baffled, drew off his cavalry with the reluctant conviction that those breastworks, so manned, were not to be won by horse. Slowly the knights retreated down the slope of the hillock, and the English, animated by that sight, would have left their stronghold to pursue, but for the warning cry of Harold. The interval in the strife thus gained was promptly and vigorously employed in repairing the palisades. And this done, Harold, turning to Haco and the thegns round him, said joyously,—

“By Heaven’s help we shall yet win this day. And know you not that it is my fortunate day,—the day on which, hitherto, all hath prospered with me, in peace and in war,—the day of my birth?”

“Of your birth!” echoed Haco in surprise.

“Ay; did you not know it?”

“Nay! strange! It is also the birthday of Duke William! What would astrologers say to the meeting of such stars?”¹

Harold’s cheek paled, but his helmet concealed the palleness; his arm drooped. The strange dream of his youth again came distinct before him, as it had come in the hall of the Norman at the sight of the ghastly relics; again he saw the shadowy hand from the cloud; again heard the voice murmuring, “Lo, the star that shone on the birth of the victor!” again he heard the words of Hilda interpreting the dream; again the chant which the dead or the fiend had poured from the rigid lips of the Vala. It boomed on his ear; hollow as a death bell it knelled through the roar of battle,—

“Never

Crown and brow shall Force dissever,
Till the dead men, unforgiving,
Loose the war-steeds on the living;

¹ Harold’s birthday was certainly the 14th of October. According to Mr. Roscoe, in his “Life of William the Conqueror,” William was born also on the 14th of October.

Till a sun whose race is ebbing
Sees the rival stars contending,
Where the dead men, unforgiving,
Wheel their war-steeds round the living!"

Faded the vision, and died the chant, as a breath that dims, and vanishes from, the mirror of steel. The breath was gone,—the firm steel was bright once more; and suddenly the king was recalled to the sense of the present hour, by shouts and cries, in which the yell of Norman triumph predominated, at the further end of the field. The signal words to Fitzosborne had conveyed to that chief the order for the mock charge on the Saxon vanguard, to be followed by the feigned flight; and so artfully had this stratagem been practised, that despite all the solemn orders of Harold, despite even the warning cry of Leofwine, who, rash and gay-hearted though he was, had yet a captain's skill,—the bold English, their blood heated by long contest and seeming victory, could not resist pursuit. They rushed forward impetuously, breaking the order of their hitherto indomitable phalanx, and the more eagerly because the Normans had unwittingly taken their way towards a part of the ground concealing dikes and ditches, into which the English trusted to precipitate the foe. It was as William's knights retreated from the breastworks that this fatal error was committed; and pointing towards the disordered Saxons with a wild laugh of revengeful joy, William set spurs to his horse, and, followed by all his chivalry, joined the cavalry of Poitou and Boulogne in their swoop upon the scattered array. Already the Norman infantry had turned round; already the horses, that lay in ambush amongst the brushwood near the dikes, had thundered forth. The whole of the late impregnable vanguard was broken up, divided corps from corps,—hemmed in; horse after horse charging to the rear, to the front, to the flank, to the right, to the left.

Gurth, with the men of Surrey and Sussex, had alone kept their ground; but they were now compelled to advance to the aid of their scattered comrades, and coming up in close order, they not only awhile stayed the slaughter, but again half

turned the day. Knowing the country thoroughly, Gurth lured the foe into the ditches concealed within a hundred yards of their own ambush; and there the havoc of the foreigners was so great, that the hollows are said to have been literally made level with the plain by their corpses. Yet this combat, however fierce, and however skill might seek to repair the former error, could not be long maintained against such disparity of numbers. And meanwhile, the whole of the division under Geoffroi Martel and his co-captains had by a fresh order of William's occupied the space between the entrenchments and the more distant engagement; thus when Harold looked up, he saw the foot of the hillocks so lined with steel, as to render it hopeless that he himself could win to the aid of his vanguard. He set his teeth firmly, looked on, and only by gesture and smothered exclamations showed his emotions of hope and fear. At length he cried,—

"Gallant Gurth! brave Leofwine, look to their pennons! right, right; well fought, sturdy Vebba! Ha! they are moving this way. The wedge cleaves on,—it cuts its path through the heart of the foe." And indeed, the chiefs now drawing off the shattered remains of their countrymen, still disunited, but still each section shaping itself wedge-like,—on came the English, with their shields over their head, through the tempest of missiles, against the rush of the steeds, here and there, through the plains, up the slopes, towards the entrenchment, in the teeth of the formidable array of Martel, and harassed behind by hosts that seemed numberless. The king could restrain himself no longer. He selected five hundred of his bravest and most practised veterans, yet comparatively fresh, and commanding the rest to stay firm, descended the hills, and charged unexpectedly into the rear of the mingled Normans and Bretons.

This sortie, well-timed though desperate, served to cover and favour the retreat of the straggling Saxons. Many indeed were cut off, but Gurth, Leofwine, and Vebba hewed the way for their followers to the side of Harold, and entered the entrenchments, close followed by the nearer foe, who were again repulsed amidst the shouts of the English.

But, alas! small indeed the band thus saved, and hopeless the thought that the small detachments of English still surviving and scattered over the plain would ever win to their aid.

Yet in those scattered remnants were, perhaps, almost the only men who, availing themselves of their acquaintance with the country, and despairing of victory, escaped by flight from the Field of SANGUELAC. Nevertheless, within the entrenchments not a man had lost heart; the day was already far advanced, no impression had been yet made on the out-works, the position seemed as impregnable as a fortress of stone; and, truth to say, even the bravest Normans were disheartened, when they looked to that eminence which had foiled the charge of William himself. The duke, in the recent *mêlée*, had received more than one wound, his third horse that day had been slain under him. The slaughter among the knights and nobles had been immense, for they had exposed their persons with the most desperate valour. And William, after surveying the rout of nearly one half of the English army, heard everywhere, to his wrath and his shame, murmurs of discontent and dismay at the prospect of scaling the heights, in which the gallant remnant had found their refuge. At this critical juncture, Odo of Bayeux, who had hitherto remained in the rear,¹ with the crowds of monks that accompanied the armament, rode into the full field, where all the hosts were re-forming their lines. He was in complete mail, but a white surplice was drawn over the steel, his head was bare, and in his right hand he bore the crozier. A formidable club swung by a leathern noose from his wrist, to be used only for self-defence: the canons forbade the priest to strike merely in assault.

Behind the milk-white steed of Odo came the whole body of reserve, fresh and unbreathed, free from the terrors of their comrades, and stung into proud wrath at the delay of the Norman conquest.

“How now! how now!” cried the prelate; “do ye flag; do ye falter when the sheaves are down, and ye have but to

¹ William Pict.

gather up the harvest? How now, sons of the Church! warriors of the Cross! avengers of the Saints! Desert your count, if ye please; but shrink not back from a Lord mightier than man. Lo, I come forth, to ride side by side with my brother, bare-headed, the crozier in my hand. He who fails his liege is but a coward,— he who fails the Church is apostate!"

The fierce shout of the reserve closed this harangue, and the words of the prelate, as well as the physical aid he brought to back them, reinvigorated the army. And now the whole of William's mighty host, covering the field, till its lines seemed to blend with the gray horizon, came on serried, steadied, orderly, to all sides of the entrenchment. Aware of the inutility of his horse till the breastworks were cleared, William placed in the van all his heavy armed foot, spear-men, and archers, to open the way through the palisades, the sorties from which had now been carefully closed.

As they came up the hills, Harold turned to Haco and said, "Where is thy battle-axe?"

"Harold," answered Haco, with more than his usual tone of sombre sadness, "I desire now to be thy shield-bearer, for thou must use thine axe with both hands while the day lasts, and thy shield is useless. Wherefore thou strike, and I will shield thee."

"Thou lovest me, then, son of Sweyn; I have sometimes doubted it."

"I love thee as the best part of my life, and with thy life ceases mine: it is my heart that my shield guards when it covers the breast of Harold."

"I would bid thee live, poor youth," whispered Harold; "but what were life if this day were lost? Happy, then, will be those who die!"

Scarce had the words left his lips ere he sprang to the breastworks, and with a sudden sweep of his axe, down dropped a helm that peered above them. But helm after helm succeeds. Now they come on, swarm upon swarm, as wolves on a traveller, as bears round a bark. Countless, amidst their carnage, on they come! The arrows of the Norman blacken the air: with deadly precision, to each

arm, each limb, each front exposed above the bulwarks, whirs the shaft. They clamber the palisades, the foremost fall dead under the Saxon axe; new thousands rush on: vain is the might of Harold, vain had been a Harold's might in every-Saxon there! The first row of breastworks is forced,— it is trampled, hewed, crushed down, cumbered with the dead. "Ha Rou! Ha Rou! Notre Dame! Notre Dame!" sounds joyous and shrill; the chargers snort and leap, and charge into the circle. High wheels in air the great mace of William; bright by the slaughterers flashes the crozier of the Church.

"On, Normans!—Earldom and land!" cries the duke.

"On, sons of the Church! Salvation and heaven!" shouts the voice of Odo.

The first breastwork down, the Saxons, yielding inch by inch, foot by foot, are pressed, crushed back, into the second enclosure. The same rush, and swarm, and fight, and cry, and roar: the second enclosure gives way. And now in the centre of the third—lo, before the eyes of the Normans towers proudly aloft, and shines in the rays of the westering sun, broidered with gold and blazing with mystic gems, the standard of England's King! And there are gathered the reserve of the English host; there the heroes who had never yet known defeat,—unwearied they by the battle, vigorous, high-hearted still; and round them the breastworks were thicker and stronger and higher, and fastened by chains to pillars of wood and staves of iron, with the wagons and carts of the baggage, and piled logs of timber,—barricades at which even William paused aghast, and Odo stifled an exclamation that became not a priestly lip.

Before that standard, in the front of the men, stood Gurth and Leofwine, and Haco and Harold, the last leaning for rest upon his axe, for he was sorely wounded in many places, and the blood oozed through the links of his mail.

Live, Harold; live yet, and Saxon England shall not die!

The English archers had at no time been numerous; most of them had served with the vanguard, and the shafts of those within the ramparts were spent; so that the foe had

time to pause and to breathe. The Norman arrows meanwhile flew fast and thick, but William noted to his grief that they struck against the tall breastworks and barricades, and so failed in the slaughter they should inflict.

He mused a moment, and sent one of his knights to call to him three of the chiefs of the archers. They were soon at the side of his *destrier*.

"See ye not, *maladroits*," said the duke, "that your shafts and bolts fall harmless on those ozier walls? Shoot in the air; let the arrow fall perpendicular on those within,—fall as the vengeance of the saints falls, direct from heaven! Give me thy bow, Archer,—thus." He drew the bow as he sat on his steed; the arrow flashed up, and descended in the heart of the reserve, within a few feet of the standard.

"So; that standard be your mark," said the duke, giving back the bow.

The archers withdrew. The order circulated through their bands, and in a few moments more down came the iron rain. It took the English host as by surprise, piercing hide cap, and even iron helm; and in the very surprise that made them instinctively look up, death came.

A dull groan as from many hearts boomed from the entrenchments on the Norman ear.

"Now," said William, "they must either use their shields to guard their heads,—and their axes are useless,—or while they smite with the axe they fall by the shaft. On now to the ramparts! I see my crown already resting on yonder standard!"

Yet despite all, the English bear up; the thickness of the palisades, the comparative smallness of the last enclosure, more easily therefore manned and maintained by the small force of the survivors, defy other weapons than those of the bow. Every Norman who attempts to scale the breastwork is slain on the instant, and his body cast forth under the hoofs of the baffled steeds. The sun sinks near and nearer towards the red horizon.

"Courage!" cries the voice of Harold, "hold but till night-fall, and ye are saved. Courage and freedom!"

"Harold and Holy Crosse!" is the answer.

Still foiled, William again resolves to hazard his fatal stratagem. He marked that quarter of the enclosure which was most remote from the chief point of attack,—most remote from the provident watch of Harold, whose cheering voice, ever and anon, he recognized amidst the hurtling clamour. In this quarter the palisades were the weakest, and the ground the least elevated; but it was guarded by men on whose skill with axe and shield Harold placed the firmest reliance,—the Anglo-Danes of his old East-Anglian earldom. Thither, then, the duke advanced a chosen column of his heavy-armed foot, tutored especially by himself in the rehearsals of his favourite *ruse*, and accompanied by a band of archers; while at the same time, he himself, with his brother Odo, headed a considerable company of knights under the son of the great Roger de Beaumont, to gain the contiguous level heights on which now stretches the little town of "Battle,"—there to watch and to aid the manœuvre. The foot column advanced to the appointed spot, and after a short, close, and terrible conflict succeeded in making a wide breach in the breastworks. But that temporary success only animates yet more the exertions of the beleagured defenders; and swarming round the breach, and pouring through it, line after line of the foe drop beneath their axes. The column of the heavy-armed Normans fell back down the slopes; they give way, they turn in disorder, they retreat, they fly; but the archers stand firm, midway on the descent; those archers seem an easy prey to the English,—the temptation is irresistible. Long galled and harassed and maddened by the shafts, the Anglo-Danes rush forth at the heels of the Norman swordsmen, and sweeping down to exterminate the archers, the breach that they leave gapes wide.

"Forward!" cried William, and he gallops towards the breach.

"Forward!" cries Odo, "I see the hands of the holy saints in the air! Forward! it is the Dead that wheel our war-steeds round the living!"

On rush the Norman knights. But Harold is already in

the breach, rallying around him hearts eager to replace the shattered breastworks.

"Close shields! Hold fast!" shouts his kingly voice.

Before him were the steeds of Bruse and Grantmesnil, at his breast their spears; Haco holds over the breast the shield. Swinging aloft with both hands his axe, the spear of Grantmesnil is shivered in twain by the king's stroke. Cloven to the skull rolls the steed of Bruse. Knight and steed roll on the bloody sward.

But a blow from the sword of De Lacie has broken down the guardian shield of Haco. The son of Sweyn is stricken to his knee. With lifted blades and whirling maces the Norman knights charge through the breach.

"Look up, look up, and guard thy head," cries the fatal voice of Haco to the king.

At that cry the king raises his flashing eyes. Why halts his stride? Why drops the axe from his hand? As he raised his head, down came the hissing death-shaft. It smote the lifted face; it crushed into the dauntless eyeball. He reeled, he staggered, he fell back several yards, at the foot of his gorgeous standard. With desperate hand he broke the head of the shaft and left the barb, quivering in the anguish.

Gurth knelt over him.

"Fight on," gasped the king, "conceal my death! Holy Crosse! England to the rescue! woe! woe!"

Rallying himself a moment, he sprang to his feet, clenched his right hand, and fell once more,—a corpse.

At the same moment a simultaneous rush of horsemen towards the standard bore back a line of Saxons, and covered the body of the king with heaps of the slain.

His helmet cloven in two, his face all streaming with blood, but still calm in its ghastly hues, amidst the foremost of those slain, fell the fated Haco. He fell with his head on the breast of Harold, kissed the bloody cheek with bloody lips, groaned, and died.

Inspired by despair with superhuman strength, Gurth, striding over the corpses of his kinsmen, opposed himself singly to the knights; and the entire strength of the English

remnant, coming round him at the menaced danger to the standard, once more drove off the assailants.

But now all the enclosure was filled with the foe, the whole space seemed gay, in the darkening air, with banderols and banners. High, through all, rose the club of the Conqueror; high, through all, shone the crozier of the Churchman. Not one Englishman fled; all now centring round the standard, they fell, slaughtering if slaughtered. Man by man, under the charmed banner, fell the lithsmen of Hilda. Then died the faithful Sexwolf; then died the gallant Godrith, redeeming, by the death of many a Norman, his young fantastic love of the Norman manners; then died, last of such of the Kentmen as had won retreat from their scattered vanguard into the circle of closing slaughter, the English-hearted Vebba.

Even still in that age, when the Teuton had yet in his veins the blood of Odin, the demi-god,—even still one man could delay the might of numbers. Through the crowd, the Normans beheld with admiring awe,—here, in the front of their horse, a single warrior, before whose axe spear shivered, helm drooped; there, close by the standard, standing breast-high among the slain, one still more formidable, and even amidst ruin unvanquished. The first fell at length under the mace of Roger de Montgommeri. So, unknown to the Norman poet (who hath preserved in his verse the deeds but not the name), fell, laughing in death, young Leofwine! Still by the enchanted standard towers the other; still the enchanted standard waves aloft, with its brave ensign of the solitary “Fighting Man” girded by the gems that had flashed in the crown of Odin.

“Thine be the honour of lowering that haughty flag,” cried William, turning to one of his favourite and most famous knights, Robert de Tessin.

Overjoyed, the knight rushed forth, to fall by the axe of that stubborn defender.

“Sorcery,” cried Fitzosborne, “sorcery! This is no man, but fiend.”

“Spare him, spare the brave,” cried in a breath Bruse, D’Aincourt, and De Graville.

William turned round in wrath at the cry of mercy, and spurring over all the corpses, with the sacred banner borne by Tonstain close behind him, so that it shadowed his helmet, he came to the foot of the standard, and for one moment there was single battle between the Knight-Duke and the Saxon hero. Nor, even then, conquered by the Norman sword, but exhausted by a hundred wounds, that brave chief fell,¹ and the falchion vainly pierced him, falling. So, last man at the standard, died Gurth.

The sun had set, the first star was in heaven, the "Fighting Man" was laid low; and on that spot where now, all forlorn and shattered, amidst stagnant water, stands the altarstone of Battle Abbey, rose the glittering dragon that surmounted the consecrated banner of the Norman victor.



CHAPTER IX.

CLOSE by his banner, amidst the piles of the dead, William the Conqueror pitched his pavilion, and sat at meat. And over all the plain, far and near, torches were moving like meteors on a marsh; for the duke had permitted the Saxon women to search for the bodies of their lords. And as he sat and talked and laughed, there entered the tent two humble monks, —their lowly mien, their dejected faces, their homely serge, in mournful contrast to the joy and the splendour of the Victory-Feast.

They came to the Conqueror, and knelt.

"Rise up, sons of the Church," said William, mildly, "for sons of the Church are *we!* Deem not that we shall invade

¹ Thus Wace,—

"Guert (Gurth) vit Engleiz amenuisier,
Vi K'il n'i ont nul recovrier," etc.

"Gurth saw the English diminish, and that there was no hope to retrieve the day; the duke pushed forth with such force that he reached him, and struck him with great violence (*par grant air*). I know not if he died by the stroke, but it is said that it laid him low."

the rights of the religion which we have come to avenge. Nay, on this spot we have already sworn to build an abbey that shall be the proudest in the land, and where masses shall be sung evermore for the repose of the brave Normans who fell in this field, and for mine and my consort's soul."

"Doubtless," said Odo, sneering, "the holy men have heard already of this pious intent, and come to pray for cells in the future abbey."

"Not so," said Osgood, mournfully, and in barbarous Norman; "we have our own beloved convent at Waltham, endowed by the prince whom thine arms have defeated. We come to ask but to bury in our sacred cloisters the corpse of him so lately king over all England,—our benefactor, Harold."

The duke's brow fell.

"And see," said Ailred, eagerly, as he drew out a leathern pouch, "we have brought with us all the gold that our poor crypts contained, for we misdoubted this day," and he poured out the glittering pieces at the Conqueror's feet.

"No!" said William, fiercely, "we take no gold for a traitor's body; no, not if Githa, the usurper's mother, offered us its weight in the shining metal; unburied be the Accursed of the Church, and let the birds of prey feed their young with his carcass!"

Two murmurs, distinct in tone and in meaning, were heard in that assembly,—the one of approval from fierce mercenaries, insolent with triumph; the other of generous discontent and indignant amaze, from the large majority of Norman nobles.

But William's brow was still dark, and his eye still stern; for his policy confirmed his passions; and it was only by stigmatizing, as dishonoured and accursed, the memory and cause of the dead king, that he could justify the sweeping spoliation of those who had fought against himself, and confiscate the lands to which his own quens and warriors looked for their reward.

The murmurs had just died into a thrilling hush, when a woman, who had followed the monks unperceived and un-

heeded, passed with a swift and noiseless step to the duke's foot-stool; and, without bending knee to the ground, said, in a voice, which, though low, was heard by all, —

"Norman, in the name of the women of England, I tell thee that thou darest not do this wrong to the hero who died in defence of their hearths and their children!"

Before she spoke she had thrown back her hood; her hair, dishevelled, fell over her shoulders, glittering like gold, in the blaze of the banquet-lights; and that wondrous beauty, without parallel amidst the dames of England, shone like the vision of an accusing angel, on the eyes of the startled duke and the breathless knights. But twice in her life Edith beheld that awful man, — once, when roused from her reverie of innocent love by the holiday pomp of his trumps and banners, the childlike maid stood at the foot of the grassy knoll; and once again, when in the hour of his triumph, and amidst the wrecks of England on the field of Sanguelac, with a soul surviving the crushed and broken heart, the faith of the lofty woman defended the Hero Dead.

There, with knee unbent and form unquailing, with marble cheek and haughty eye, she faced the Conqueror; and, as she ceased, his noble barons broke into bold applause.

"Who art thou?" said William, if not daunted, at least amazed. "Methinks I have seen thy face before; thou art not Harold's wife or sister?"

"Dread lord," said Osgood, "she was the betrothed of Harold; but, as within the degrees of kin, the Church forbade their union, and they obeyed the Church."

Out from the banquet-throng stepped Mallet de Graville. "O my liege," said he, "thou hast promised me lands and earldom; instead of these gifts undeserved, bestow on me the right to bury and to honour the remains of Harold; to-day I took from him my life, let me give all I can in return,—a grave!"

William paused; but the sentiment of the assembly, so clearly pronounced, and, it may be, his own better nature, which, ere polluted by plotting craft and hardened by despotic ire, was magnanimous and heroic, moved and won him.

"Lady," said he, gently, "thou appealest not in vain to Norman knighthood: thy rebuke was just, and I repent me of a hasty impulse. Mallet de Graville, thy prayer is granted; to thy choice be consigned the place of burial, to thy care the funeral rites of him whose soul hath passed out of human judgment."

The feast was over; William the Conqueror slept on his couch, and round him slumbered his Norman knights, dreaming of baronies to come; and still the torches moved dismally to and fro the waste of death, and through the hush of night was heard near and far the wail of women.

Accompanied by the brothers of Waltham, and attended by link-bearers, Mallet de Graville was yet engaged in the search for the royal dead—and the search was vain. Deeper and stiller the autumnal moon rose to its melancholy noon, and lent its ghastly aid to the glare of the redder lights. But on leaving the pavilion, they had missed Edith; she had gone from them alone, and was lost in that dreadful wilderness. And Ailred said despondingly,—

"Perchance we may already have seen the corpse we search for, and not recognized it; for the face may be mutilated with wounds. And therefore it is that Saxon wives and mothers haunt our battle-fields, discovering those they search by signs not known without the household."¹

"Ay," said the Norman, "I comprehend thee,—by the letter or device, in which, according to your customs, your warriors impress on their own forms some token of affection, or some fancied charm against ill."

"It is so," answered the monk; "wherefore I grieve that we have lost the guidance of the maid."

While thus conversing, they had retraced their steps, almost in despair, towards the duke's pavilion.

"See," said De Graville, "how near yon lonely woman hath

¹ The suggestion implied in the text will probably be admitted as correct, when we read in the Saxon annals of the recognition of the dead by peculiar marks on their bodies; the obvious, or at least the most natural explanation of those signs, is to be found in the habit of puncturing the skin, mentioned by the Malmesbury chronicler.

come to the tent of the duke,—yea, to the foot of the holy gonfanon, which supplanted ‘the Fighting Man’! *Pardex*, my heart bleeds to see her striving to lift up the heavy dead!”

The monks neared the spot, and Osgood exclaimed in a voice almost joyful,—

“It is Edith the Fair! This way, the torches! hither, quick!”

The corpses had been flung in irreverent haste from either side of the gonfanon, to make room for the banner of the conquest and the pavilion of the feast. Huddled together, they lay in that holy bed. And the woman silently, and by the help of no light save the moon, was intent on her search. She waved her hand impatiently as they approached, as if jealous of the dead: but as she had not sought, so neither did she oppose, their aid. Moaning low to herself, she desisted from her task, and knelt watching them, and shaking her head mournfully, as they removed helm after helm, and lowered the torches upon stern and livid brows. At length the lights fell red and full on the ghastly face of Haco,—proud and sad as in life.

De Graville uttered an exclamation: “The king’s nephew: be sure the king is near!”

A shudder went over the woman’s form, and the moaning ceased.

They unhelmed another corpse; and the monks and the knight, after one glance, turned away sickened and awestricken at the sight: for the face was all defeatured and mangled with wounds, and nought could they recognize save the ravaged majesty of what had been man. But at the sight of that face a wild shriek broke from Edith’s heart.

She started to her feet,—put aside the monks with a wild and angry gesture, and bending over the face, sought with her long hair to wipe from it the clotted blood; then with convulsive fingers she strove to loosen the buckler of the breast-mail. The knight knelt to assist her. “No, no,” she gasped out. “He is mine,—mine now!”

Her hands bled as the mail gave way to her efforts; the tunic beneath was all dabbled with blood. She rent the folds,

and on the breast, just above the silenced heart, were punctured in the old Saxon letters the word “EDITH,” and just below, in characters more fresh, the word “ENGLAND.”

“See, see!” she cried, in piercing accents; and clasping the dead in her arms, she kissed the lips, and called aloud, in words of the tenderest endearments, as if she addressed the living. All there knew then that the search was ended; all knew that the eyes of love had recognized the dead.

“Wed, wed,” murmured the betrothed; “wed at last! O Harold, Harold! the words of the Vala were true—and Heaven is kind!” and laying her head gently on the breast of the dead, she smiled and died.

At the east end of the choir in the Abbey of Waltham was long shown the tomb of the Last Saxon King, inscribed with the touching words, “Harold Infelix.” But not under that stone, according to the chronicler who should best know the truth,¹ mouldered the dust of him in whose grave was buried an epoch in human annals.

“Let his corpse,” said William the Norman, “let his corpse guard the coasts which his life madly defended. Let the seas wail his dirge, and girdle his grave; and his spirit protect the land which hath passed to the Norman’s sway.”

And Mallet de Graville assented to the word of his chief, for his knightly heart turned into honour the latent taunt; and well he knew that Harold could have chosen no burial-spot so worthy his English spirit and his Roman end.

The tomb at Waltham would have excluded the faithful ashes of the betrothed, whose heart had broken on the bosom she had found; more gentle was the grave in the temple of heaven, and hallowed by the bridal death-dirge of the everlasting sea.

So, in that sentiment of poetry and love, which made half the religion of a Norman knight, Mallet de Graville suffered death to unite those whom life had divided. In the holy burial-ground that encircled a small Saxon chapel, on the shore, and near the spot on which William had leaped to

¹ The contemporary Norman chronicler, William of Poitiers. See Note R.

land, one grave received the betrothed; and the tomb of Waltham only honoured an empty name.¹

Eight centuries have rolled away, and where is the Norman now,—or where is not the Saxon? The little urn that sufficed for the mighty lord² is despoiled of his very dust; but the tombless shade of the kingly freeman still guards the coasts, and rests upon the seas. In many a noiseless field, with Thoughts for Armies, your relics, O Saxon Heroes, have won back the victory from the bones of the Norman saints; and whenever, with fairer fates, Freedom opposes Force, and Justice, redeeming the old defeat, smites down the armed Frauds that would consecrate the wrong,—smile, O soul of our Saxon Harold, smile, appeased, on the Saxon's land!

¹ See Note R.

² “Rex magnus parva jacet hic Gulielmus in urna —
Sufficit et magno parva Domus Domino.”

From William the Conqueror's epitaph (ap-Gemitcen). His bones are said to have been disinterred some centuries after his death.

NOTES.

NOTE P, PAGE 63.

Harold's Accession.

THERE are, as is well known, two accounts as to Edward the Confessor's death-bed disposition of the English crown. The Norman chroniclers affirm, first, that Edward promised William the crown during his exile in Normandy; secondly, that Siward, Earl of Northumbria, Godwin, and Leofric had taken oath, "serment de la main," to receive him as Seigneur after Edward's death, and that the hostages Wolnoth and Haco were given to the duke in pledge of that oath;¹ thirdly, that Edward left him the crown by will.

Let us see what probability there is of truth in these three assertions.

First, Edward promised William the crown when in Normandy.

This seems probable enough, and it is corroborated indirectly by the Saxon chroniclers, when they unite in relating Edward's warnings to Harold against his visit to the Norman court. Edward might well be aware of William's designs on the crown (though in those warnings he refrains from mentioning them), — might remember the authority given to those designs by his own early promise, and know the secret purpose for which the hostages were retained by William, and the advantages he would seek to gain from having Harold himself in his power. But this promise in itself was clearly not binding on the English people, nor on any one but Edward, who, without the sanction of the Witan, could not fulfil it. And that William himself could not have attached great importance to it during Edward's life is clear, because if he had, the time to urge it was when Edward sent into Germany for the Atheling, as the heir presumptive of the throne. This was a virtual annihilation of the promise; but William took no step to urge it, made no complaint and no remonstrance.

Secondly, That Godwin, Siward, and Leofric had taken oaths of fealty to William.

This appears a fable wholly without foundation. When could those oaths have been pledged? Certainly not after Harold's visit to William,

¹ William of Poitiers.

for they were then all dead. At the accession of Edward? This is obviously contradicted by the stipulation which Godwin and the other chiefs of the Witan exacted, that Edward should not come accompanied by Norman supporters; by the evident jealousy of the Normans entertained by those chiefs, as by the whole English people, who regarded the alliance of Ethelred with the Norman Emma as the cause of the greatest calamities; and by the marriage of Edward himself with Godwin's daughter,—a marriage which that earl might naturally presume would give legitimate heirs to the throne. In the interval between Edward's accession and Godwin's outlawry? No; for all the English chroniclers, and, indeed, the Norman, concur in representing the ill-will borne by Godwin and his House to the Norman favourites, whom, if they could have anticipated William's accession, or were in any way bound to William, they would have naturally conciliated. But Godwin's outlawry is the result of the breach between him and the foreigners. In William's visit to Edward? No; for that took place when Godwin was an exile; and even the writers who assert Edward's early promise to William declare that nothing was then said as to the succession to the throne. To Godwin's return from outlawry the Norman chroniclers seem to refer the date of this pretended oath, by the assertion that the hostages were given in pledge of it. This is the most monstrous supposition of all; for Godwin's return is followed by the banishment of the Norman favourites, by the utter downfall of the Norman party in England, by the decree of the Witan that all the troubles in England had come from the Normans, by the triumphant ascendancy of Godwin's House. And is it creditable for a moment, that the great English Earl could then have agreed to a pledge to transfer the kingdom to the very party he had expelled, and expose himself and his party to the vengeance of a foe he had thoroughly crushed for the time, and whom, without any motive or object, he himself agreed to restore to power for his own probable perdition? When examined, this assertion falls to the ground from other causes. It is not among the arguments that William uses in his embassies to Harold; it rests mainly upon the authority of William of Poitiers, who, though a contemporary, and a good authority on some points purely Norman, is grossly ignorant as to the most accredited and acknowledged facts in all that relate to the English. Even with regard to the hostages, he makes the most extraordinary blunders. He says they were sent by Edward, with the consent of his nobles, accompanied by Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury. Now Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, had fled from England as fast as he could fly on the return of Godwin; and arrived in Normandy, half

drowned, before the hostages were sent, or even before the Witan which reconciled Edward and Godwin had assembled. He says that William restored to Harold "his young brother;" whereas it was Haec, the nephew, who was restored; we know, by Norinian as well as Saxon Chroniclers, that Wolnoth, the brother, was not released till after the Conqueror's death (he was re-imprisoned by Rufus); and his partiality may be judged by the assertions, first, that "William gave nothing to a Norman that was unjustly taken from an Englishman;" and secondly, that Odo, whose horrible oppressions revolted even William himself, "never had an equal for justice, and that all the English obeyed him willingly."

We may, therefore, dismiss this assertion as utterly groundless, on its own merits, without directly citing against it the Saxon authorities.

Thirdly, That Edward left William the crown by will.

On this assertion alone, of the three, the Norman Conqueror himself seems to have rested a positive claim.¹ But if so, where was the will? Why was it never produced or producible? If destroyed, where were the witnesses; why were they not cited? The testamentary dispositions of an Anglo-Saxon king were always respected, and went far towards the succession; but it was absolutely necessary to prove them before the Witan.² An oral act of this kind, in the words of the dying Sovereign, would be legal, but they must be confirmed by those who heard them. Why, when William was master of England, and acknowledged by a National Assembly convened in London, and when all who heard the dying king would have been naturally disposed to give every evidence in William's favour, not only to flatter the new sovereign, but to soothe the national pride, and justify the Norman succession by a more popular plea than conquest, — why were no witnesses summoned to prove the bequest? Alred, Stigand, and the Abbot of Westminster must have been present at the death-bed of the king, and these priests concurred in submission to William. If they had any testimony as to

¹ He is considered to refer to such bequest in one of his charters: "Devicto Haroldo rege cum suis complicibus qui michi regnum prudentia Domini destinatum, et beneficio concessionis Domini et cognati mei gloriosi regis Edwardi concessum conati sunt auferre." — FORESTINA, A. 3.

But William's word is certainly not to be taken, for he never scrupled to break it; and even in these words he does not state that it was left him by Edward's will, but destined and given to him, — words founded, perhaps, solely on the promise referred to, before Edward came to the throne, corroborated by some messages in the earlier years of his reign, through the Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, who seems to have been a notable intriguer to that end.

² Palgrave, Commonwealth, 560.

Edward's bequest in his favour, would they not have been too glad to give it, in justification of themselves, in compliment to William, in duty to the people, in vindication of law against force? But no such attempt at proof was ventured upon.

Against these, the mere assertion of William, and the authority of Normans who could know nothing of the truth of the matter, while they had every interest to misrepresent the facts, we have the positive assurances of the best possible authorities. The Saxon Chronicle (worth all the other annalists put together) says expressly that Edward left the crown to Harold: —

“The sage, ne'ertheless,
The realm committed
To a highly-born man,—
Harold's self,
The noble Earl.
He in all time
Obeyed faithfully
His rightful lord,
By words and deeds;
Nor aught neglected
Which needful was
To his sovereign king.”

Florence of Worcester, the next best authority (valuable from supplying omissions in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle), says expressly that the king chose Harold for his successor before his decease,¹ that he was elected by the chief men of all England, and consecrated by Alfred. Hoveden, Simon (Dunelm.), the Beverley chronicler, confirm these authorities as to Edward's choice of Harold as his successor. William of Malmesbury, who is not partial to Harold, writing in the reign of Henry the First, has doubts himself as to Edward's bequest (though grounded on a very bad argument, — namely, “the improbability that Edward would leave his crown to a man of whose power he had always been jealous.”) There is no proof that Edward had been jealous of *Harold's* power, — he had been of *Godwin's*; but Malmesbury gives a more valuable authority than his own, in the concurrent opinion of his time, for he deposes that “*the English say*” the diadem was granted him (Harold) by the king.

These evidences are, to say the least, infinitely more worthy of his-

¹ Quo tumulato, subregulus Haroldus Godwin Ducis filius, quem rex ante suam decessionem regni successorem elegerat, a totius Anglie primatisbus, ad regale culmen electus, die eodem ab Aldredo Eboracensi Archiepiscopo in regem est honorifice consecratus. — *FLOR. Wig.*

torical credence than the one or two English chroniclers, of little comparative estimation (such as Wike), and the prejudiced and ignorant Norman chroniclers,¹ who depose on behalf of William. I assume, therefore, that Edward left the crown to Harold; of Harold's better claim in the election of the Witan there is no doubt. But Sir F. Palgrave starts the notion that, "admitting that the prelates, earls, aldermen, and thanes of Wessex and East Anglia had sanctioned the accession of Harold, their decision could not have been obligatory on the other kingdoms (provinces); and the very short time elapsing between the death of Edward and the recognition of Harold utterly precludes the supposition that their consent was even asked." This great writer must permit me, with all reverence, to suggest that he has, I think, forgotten the fact that, just prior to Edward's death, an assembly, fully as numerous as ever met in any national Witan, had been convened to attend the consecration of the new abbey and church of Westminster, which Edward considered the great work of his life; that assembly would certainly not have dispersed during a period so short and anxious as the mortal illness of the king, which appears to have prevented his attending the ceremony in person, and which ended in his death a very few days after the consecration. So that during the interval, which appears to have been at most about a week, between Edward's death and Harold's coronation,² the unusually large concourse of prelates and nobles from all parts of the kingdom assembled in London and Westminster would have furnished the numbers requisite to give weight and sanction to the Witan. And had it not been so, the Saxon chroniclers, and still more the Norman, would scarcely have omitted some remark in qualification of the election. But not a word is said as to any inadequate number in the Witan. And as for the two great principalities of Northumbria and Mercia, Harold's recent marriage with the sister of their earls might naturally tend to secure their allegiance.

¹ Some of these Norman chroniclers tell an absurd story of Harold's seizing the crown from the hand of the bishop, and putting it himself on his head. The Bayeux Tapestry, which is William's most connected apology for his claim, shows no such violence; but Harold is represented as crowned very peaceably. With more art (as I have observed elsewhere), the Tapestry represents Stigand as crowning him instead of Alred,—Stigand being at that time under the Pope's interdict.

² Edward died January 5th. Harold's coronation is said to have taken place January the 12th; but there is no very satisfactory evidence as to the precise day; indeed some writers would imply that he was crowned the day after Edward's death, which is scarcely possible.

Nor is it to be forgotten that a very numerous Witan had assembled at Oxford a few months before, to adjudge the rival claims of Tostig and Morear; the decision of the Witan proves the alliance between Harold's party and that of the young earl's,—ratified by the marriage with Aldyth. And he who has practically engaged in the contests and cabals of party will allow the probability, adopted as fact in the romance, that, considering Edward's years and infirm health, and the urgent necessity of determining beforehand the claims to the succession, some actual, if secret, understanding was then come to by the leading chiefs. It is a common error in history to regard as sudden that which in the nature of affairs never can be sudden. All that paved Harold's way to the throne must have been silently settled long before the day in which the Witan elected him *unanimis omnium consensu*.¹

With the views to which my examination of the records of the time have led me in favour of Harold, I cannot but think that Sir F. Palgrave, in his admirable History of Anglo-Saxon England, does scanty justice to the Last of its kings; and that his peculiar political and constitutional theories, and his attachment to the principle of hereditary succession, which make him consider that Harold "had no clear title to the crown anyway," tincture with something like the prejudice of party his estimate of Harold's character and pretensions. My profound admiration for Sir F. Palgrave's learning and judgment would not permit me to make this remark without carefully considering and reweighing all the contending authorities on which he himself relies. And I own that, of all modern historians, Thierry seems to me to have given the most just idea of the great actors in the tragedy of the Norman invasion, though I incline to believe that he has overrated the oppressive influence of the Norman dynasty in which the tragedy closed.

NOTE Q, PAGE 79.

Physical Peculiarities of the Scandinavians.

"IT is a singular circumstance, that in almost all the swords of those ages to be found in the collection of weapons in the Antiquarian Museum at Copenhagen, the handles indicate a size of hand very much smaller than the hands of modern people of any class or rank. No modern dandy, with the most delicate hands, would find room for

¹ *Vit. Harold. Chron. Ang. Norm.*

his hand to grasp or wield with ease some of the swords of these Northmen.”¹

This peculiarity is by some scholars adduced, not without reason, as an argument for the Eastern origin of the Scandinavian. Nor was it uncommon for the Asiatic Scythians, and indeed many of the early warlike tribes fluctuating between the east and west of Europe, to be distinguished by the blue eyes and yellow hair of the north. The physical attributes of a deity or a hero are usually to be regarded as those of the race to which he belongs. The golden locks of Apollo and Achilles are the sign of a similar characteristic in the nations of which they are the types; and the blue eye of Minerva belies the absurd doctrine that would identify her with the Egyptian Naith.

The Norman retained perhaps longer than the Scandinavian, from whom he sprang, the somewhat effeminate peculiarity of small hands and feet; and hence, as throughout all the nobility of Europe the Norman was the model for imitation, and the ruling families in many lands sought to trace from him their descents, so that characteristic is, even to our day, ridiculously regarded as a sign of noble race. The Norman probably retained that peculiarity longer than the Dane, because his habits, as a conqueror, made him disdain all manual labour; and it was below his knightly dignity to walk, as long as a horse could be found for him to ride. But the Anglo-Norman (the noblest specimen of the great conquering family) became so blent with the Saxon, both in blood and in habits, that such physical distinctions vanished with the age of chivalry. The Saxon blood in our highest aristocracy now predominates greatly over the Norman; and it would be as vain a task to identify the sons of Hastings and Rollo by the foot and hand of the old Asiatic Scythian, as by the reddish auburn hair and the high features which were no less ordinarily their type. Here and there such peculiarities may all be seen amongst plain country gentlemen, settled from time immemorial in the counties peopled by the Anglo-Danes, and intermarrying generally in their own provinces; but amongst the far more mixed breed of the larger landed proprietors comprehended in the Peerage, the Saxon attributes of race are strikingly conspicuous, and, amongst them, the large hand and foot common with all the Germanic tribes.

¹ Laing’s Note to Snorro Sturleson, vol. iii. p. 101.

NOTE E, PAGE 181.

The Interment of Harold.

HERE we are met by evidences of the most contradictory character. According to most of the English writers, the body of Harold was given by William to Githa, without ransom, and buried at Waltham. There is even a story told of the generosity of the Conqueror, in cashiering a soldier who gashed the corpse of the dead hero. This last, however, seems to apply to some other Saxon, and not to Harold. But William of Poitiers, who was the duke's own chaplain, and whose narration of the battle appears to contain more internal evidence of accuracy than the rest of his chronicle, expressly says that William refused Githa's offer of its weight in gold for the supposed corpse of Harold, and ordered it to be buried on the beach, with the taunt quoted in the text of this work, "Let him guard the coast which he madly occupied;" and on the pretext that one whose cupidity and avarice had been the cause that so many men were slaughtered and lay unsepultured was not worthy himself of a tomb. Orderic confirms this account, and says the body was given to William Mallet, for that purpose.¹

Certainly William de Poitiers ought to have known best; and the probability of his story is to a certain degree borne out by the uncertainty as to Harold's positive interment, which long prevailed, and which even gave rise to a story related by Giraldus Cambrensis (and to be found also in the Harleian Manuscripts), that Harold survived the battle, became a monk in Chester, and before he died had a long and secret interview with Henry the First. Such a legend, however absurd, could scarcely have gained any credit if (as the usual story runs) Harold had been formally buried, in the presence of many of the Norman barons, in Waltham Abbey; but would very easily creep into belief, if his body had been carelessly consigned to a Norman knight, to be buried privately by the seashore.

¹ This William Mallet was the father of Robert Mallet, founder of the Priory of Eye, in Suffolk (a branch of the House of Mallet de Graville). — PLUQUET. He was also the ancestor of the great William Mallet (or Malet, as the old Scandinavian name was now corruptly spelled), one of the illustrious twenty-five "conservators" of Magna Charta. The family is still extant; and I have to apologize to Sir Alexander Malet, Bart. (Her Majesty's Minister at Stutgard), Lieut.-Col. Charles St. Lo Malet, the Rev. William Windham Malet (Vicar of Ardley), and other members of that ancient House, for the liberty taken with the name of their gallant forefather.

The story of Osgood and Ailred, the childemaister (schoolmaster in the monastery), as related by Palgrave, and used in this romance, is recorded in a Manuscript of Waltham Abbey, and was written somewhere about fifty or sixty years after the event,—say at the beginning of the twelfth century. These two monks followed Harold to the field, placed themselves so as to watch its results, offered ten marks for the body, obtained permission for the search, and could not recognize the mutilated corpse until Osgood sought and returned with Edith. In point of fact, according to this authority, it must have been two or three days after the battle before the discovery was made.

THE END.

FALKLAND.

VOL. II.—18

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE KNEBWORTH EDITION.

“*FALKLAND*” is the earliest of Lord Lytton’s prose fictions. Published before “*Pelham*,” it was written in the boyhood of its illustrious author. In the maturity of his manhood and the fulness of his literary popularity he withdrew it from print. In this edition of his collected works the tale re-appears. It is because the morality of it was condemned by his experienced judgment, that the author of “*Falkland*” deliberately omitted it from each of the numerous reprints of his novels and romances which were published in England during his lifetime.

The publishers therefore desire to state the motives which have induced them, with the consent of the author’s son, to include “*Falkland*” in the present edition of his collected works.

In the first place, this work has been for many years, and still is, accessible to English readers in every country except England. The Continental edition of it, published by Baron Tauchnitz, has a wide circulation ; and since for this reason the book cannot practically be withheld from the public, it is thought desirable that the publication of it should at least be accompanied by some record of the above-mentioned fact.

In the next place, the considerations which would naturally guide an author of established reputation in the selection of early compositions for subsequent republication,

are obviously inapplicable to the preparation of a posthumous standard edition of his collected works. Those who read the tale of "Falkland" at the time of its first publication have long survived the age when character is influenced by the literature of sentiment. The readers to whom it is now presented are not Lord Lytton's contemporaries; they are his posterity. To them his works have already become classical. It is only upon the minds of the young that the works of sentiment have any appreciable moral influence. But the sentiment of each age is peculiar to itself; and the purely moral influence of sentimental fiction seldom survives the age to which it was first addressed. The youngest and most impressionable reader of such works as the "Nouvelle Hélöise," "Werthe," "The Robbers," "Corinne," or "René," is not now likely to be morally influenced, for good or ill, by the perusal of those masterpieces of genius. Had Byron attained the age at which great authors most realize the responsibilities of fame and genius, he might possibly have regretted, and endeavoured to suppress, the publication of "Don Juan;" but the possession of that immortal poem is an unmixed benefit to posterity, and the loss of it would have been an irreparable misfortune.

"Falkland," although the earliest, is one of the most carefully finished of its author's compositions. All that was once turbid, heating, unwholesome in the current of sentiment which flows through this history of a guilty passion "Death's immortalizing winter" has chilled and purified. The book is now a harmless, and, it may be hoped, a not uninteresting, evidence of the precocity of its author's genius; and as such, it is here reprinted.

FALKLAND.

BOOK I.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON.
FREDERICK MONKTON.

L—, May —, 1822.

You are mistaken, my dear Monkton! Your description of the gayety of “the season” gives me no emotion. You speak of pleasure; I remember no labour so wearisome: you enlarge upon its changes; no sameness appears to me so monotonous. Keep, then, your pity for those who require it. From the height of my philosophy I compassionate *you*. No one is so vain as a recluse; and your jests at my hermitship and hermitage cannot penetrate the folds of a self-conceit, which does not envy you in your suppers at D— House, nor even in your waltzes with Eleanor —.

It is a ruin rather than a house which I inhabit. I have not been at L— since my return from abroad, and during those years the place has gone rapidly to decay; perhaps, for that reason, it suits me better,— *tel maître telle maison*.

Of all my possessions this is the least valuable in itself, and derives the least interest from the associations of childhood, for it was not at L— that any part of that period was spent. I have, however, chosen it for my present retreat, because here only I am personally unknown, and therefore little likely to be disturbed. I do not, indeed, wish for the interruptions designed as civilities; I rather gather around myself, link after link, the chains that connected me with the

world. I find among my own thoughts that variety and occupation which you only experience in your intercourse with others; and I make, like the Chinese, my map of the universe consist of a circle in a square,—the circle is my own empire of thought *and self*; and it is to the scanty corners which it leaves without, that I banish whatever belongs to the remainder of mankind.

About a mile from L—— is Mr. Mandeville's beautiful villa of E——, in the midst of grounds which form a delightful contrast to the savage and wild scenery by which they are surrounded. As the house is at present quite deserted, I have obtained, through the gardener, a free admittance into his domains; and I pass there whole hours, indulging, like the hero of the "Lutrin," "*une sainteoisiveté*," listening to a little noisy brook, and letting my thoughts be almost as vague and idle as the birds which wander among the trees that surround me. I could wish, indeed, that this simile were in all things correct,—that those thoughts, if as free, were also as happy as the objects of my comparison, and could, like them, after the rovings of the day, turn at evening to a resting-place, and be still. We are the dupes and the victims of our senses: while we use them to gather from external things the hoards that we store within, we cannot foresee the punishments we prepare for ourselves,—the remembrance which stings, and the hope which deceives, the passions which promise us rapture, which reward us with despair, and the thoughts which, if they constitute the healthful action, make also the feverish excitement of our minds. What sick man has not dreamed in his delirium everything that our philosophers have said?¹ But I am growing into my old habit of gloomy reflection, and it is time that I should conclude. I meant to have written you a letter as light as your own; if I have failed, it is no wonder. "Notre cœur est un instrument incomplet,—une lyre où il manque des cordes, et où nous sommes forcés de rendre les accents de la joie sur le ton consacré aux soupirs."

¹ Quid aegrotus unquam somniavit quod philosophorum aliquis non dixerit? — LACTANTIUS.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

You ask me to give you some sketch of my life, and of that *bel mondo* which wearied me so soon. Men seldom reject an opportunity to talk of themselves; and I am not unwilling to re-examine the past, to re-connect it with the present, and to gather from a consideration of each what hopes and expectations are still left to me for the future.

But my detail must be rather of thought than of action; most of those whose fate has been connected with mine are now living, and I would not, even to you, break that tacit confidence which much of my history would require. After all, you will have no loss. The actions of another may interest, but, for the most part, it is only his reflections which come home to us; for few have acted, nearly all of us have thought.

My own vanity too would be unwilling to enter upon incidents which had their origin either in folly or in error. It is true that those follies and errors have ceased, but their effects remain. With years our *faults* diminish, but our *vices* increase.

You know that my mother was Spanish, and that my father was one of that old race of which so few scions remain, who, living in a distant country, have been little influenced by the changes of fashion, and, priding themselves on the antiquity of their names, have looked with contempt upon the modern distinctions and the mushroom nobles which have sprung up to discountenance and eclipse the plainness of more venerable and solid respectability. In his youth my father had served in the army. He had known much of men and more of books; but his knowledge, instead of rooting out, had rather been engrrafted on his prejudices. He was one of that class (and I say it with a private reverence, though a public regret), who, with the best intentions, have made the worst citizens, and who think it a duty to perpetuate whatever is pernicious by having learned to consider it as sacred. He was a great country gentleman, a great sportsman, and a great Tory,—

perhaps the three worst enemies which a country can have. Though beneficent to the poor, he gave but a cold reception to the rich; for he was too refined to associate with his inferiors, and too proud to like the competition of his equals. One ball and two dinners a year constituted all the aristocratic portion of our hospitality; and at the age of twelve, the noblest and youngest companions that I possessed were a large Danish dog and a wild mountain pony, as unbroken and as lawless as myself. It is only in later years that we can perceive the immeasurable importance of the early scenes and circumstances which surrounded us. It was in the loneliness of my unchecked wanderings that my early affection for my own thoughts was conceived. In the seclusion of Nature—in whatever court she presided—the education of my mind was begun; and, even at that early age, I rejoiced (like the wild hart the Grecian poet¹ has described) in the stillness of the great woods, and the solitudes unbroken by human footstep.

The first change in my life was under melancholy auspices: my father fell suddenly ill, and died; and my mother, whose very existence seemed only held in his presence, followed him in three months. I remember that, a few hours before her death, she called me to her: she reminded me that, through her, I was of Spanish extraction; that in her country I received my birth; and that, not the less for its degradation and distress, I might hereafter find in the relations which I held to it a remembrance to value, or even a duty to fulfil. On her tenderness to me at that hour, on the impression it made upon my mind, and on the keen and enduring sorrow which I felt for months after her death, it would be useless to dwell.

My uncle became my guardian. He is, you know, a member of parliament of some reputation; very sensible and very dull; very much respected by men, very much disliked by women; and inspiring all children, of either sex, with the same unmitigated aversion which he feels for them himself.

I did not remain long under his immediate care. I was soon sent to school,—that preparatory world, where the great primal principles of human nature, in the aggression of the

¹ Euripides, *Bacchae*, l. 874.

strong and the meanness of the weak, constitute the earliest lesson of importance that we are taught; and where the forced *primitiae* of that less universal knowledge which is useless to the many who in after-life neglect, and bitter to the few who improve it, are the first motives for which our minds are to be broken to terror, and our hearts initiated into tears.

Bold and resolute by temper, I soon carved myself a sort of career among my associates. A hatred to all oppression, and a haughty and unyielding character, made me at once the fear and aversion of the greater powers and principalities of the school; while my agility at all boyish games, and my ready assistance or protection to every one who required it, made me proportionally popular with, and courted by, the humbler multitude of the subordinate classes. I was constantly surrounded by the most lawless and mischievous followers whom the school could afford,—all eager for my commands, and all pledged to their execution.

In good truth, I was a worthy Rowland of such a gang; though I excelled in, I cared little for, the ordinary amusements of the school: I was fonder of engaging in marauding expeditions contrary to our legislative restrictions, and I valued myself equally upon my boldness in planning our exploits, and my dexterity in eluding their discovery. But exactly in proportion as our school terms connected me with those of my own years, did our vacations unfit me for any intimate companionship but that which I already began to discover in myself.

Twice in the year, when I went home, it was to that wild and romantic part of the country where my former childhood had been spent. There, alone and unchecked, I was thrown utterly upon my own resources. I wandered by day over the rude scenes which surrounded us; and at evening I pored, with an unwearied delight, over the ancient legends which made those scenes sacred to my imagination. I grew by degrees of a more thoughtful and visionary nature. My temper imbued the romance of my studies; and whether, in winter, basking by the large hearth of our old hall, or stretched, in the indolent voluptuousness of summer, by the rushing streams which

formed the chief characteristic of the country around us, my hours were equally wasted in those dim and luxurious dreams, which constituted, perhaps, the essence of that poetry I had not the genius to embody. It was then, by that alternate restlessness of action and idleness of reflection, into which my young years were divided, that the impress of my character was stamped: that fitfulness of temper, that affection for extremes, has accompanied me through life. Hence, not only all intermediums of emotion appear to me as tame, but even the most overwrought excitation can bring neither novelty nor zest. I have, as it were, feasted upon the passions; I have made that my daily food, which, in its strength and excess, would have been poison to others; I have rendered my mind unable to enjoy the ordinary aliments of nature; and I have wasted, by a premature indulgence, my resources and my powers, till I have left my heart, without a remedy or a hope, to whatever disorders its own intemperance has engendered.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

When I left Dr. ——'s, I was sent to a private tutor in D——e. Here I continued for about two years. It was during that time that — but what *then* befell me is for no living ear! The characters of that history are engraven on my heart in letters of fire; but it is a language that none but myself have the authority to read. It is enough for the purpose of my confessions that the events of that period were connected with the first awakening of the most powerful of human passions, and that, whatever their commencement, their end was despair! and *she* — the object of that love, the only being in the world who ever possessed the secret and the spell of my nature — *her* life was the bitterness and the fever of a troubled heart, — her rest is the grave, —

“Non la conobbe il mondo mentre l'ebbe
Con ibill 'io, ch 'a pianger qui rimasi.”

That attachment was not so much a single event, as the first link in a long chain which was coiled around my heart.

It were a tedious and bitter history, even were it permitted, to tell you of all the sins and misfortunes to which in after-life that passion was connected. I will only speak of the more hidden but general effect it had upon my mind; though, indeed, naturally inclined to a morbid and melancholy philosophy, it is more than probable, but for that occurrence, that it would never have found matter for excitement. Thrown early among mankind, I should early have imbibed their feelings, and grown like them by the influence of custom. I should not have carried within me one unceasing remembrance, which was to teach me, like Faustus, to find nothing in knowledge but its inutility, or in hope but its deceit; and to bear like him, through the blessings of youth and the allurements of pleasure, the curse and the presence of a fiend.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

It was after the first violent grief produced by that train of circumstances to which I must necessarily so darkly allude, that I began to apply with earnestness to books. Night and day I devoted myself unceasingly to study, and from this fit I was only recovered by the long and dangerous illness it produced. Alas! there is no fool like him who wishes for knowledge! It is only through woe that we are taught to reflect, and we gather the honey of worldly wisdom, not from flowers, but thorns.

“Une grande passion malheureuse est un grand moyen de sagesse.” From the moment in which the buoyancy of my spirit was first broken by real anguish, the losses of the *heart* were repaired by the experience of the *mind*. I passed at once, like Melmoth, from youth to age. What were any longer to me the ordinary avocations of my contemporaries? I had exhausted years in moments,—I had wasted, like the Eastern Queen, my richest jewel in a draught. I ceased to hope, to feel, to act, to burn: such are the impulses of the young! I learned to doubt, to reason, to analyze: such are the habits of the old! From that time, if I have not avoided the pleasures of life, I have not enjoyed them. Women, wine,

the society of the gay, the commune of the wise, the lonely pursuit of knowledge, the daring visions of ambition,—all have occupied me in turn, and all alike have deceived me; but, like the Widow in the story of Voltaire, I have built at last a temple to “Time the Comforter;” I have grown calm and unrepining with years; and, if I am now shrinking from men, I have derived at least this advantage from the loneliness first made habitual by regret,—that while I feel increased benevolence to others, I have learned to look for happiness only in myself.

They alone are independent of Fortune who have made themselves a separate existence from the world.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I went to the University with a great fund of general reading, and habits of constant application. My uncle, who, having no children of his own, began to be ambitious for me, formed great expectations of my career at Oxford. I stayed there three years, and did nothing! I did not gain a single prize, nor did I attempt anything above the ordinary degree. The fact is, that nothing seemed to me worth the labour of success. I conversed with those who had obtained the highest academical reputation, and I smiled with a consciousness of superiority at the boundlessness of their vanity, and the narrowness of their views. The limits of the distinction they had gained seemed to them as wide as the most extended renown; and the little knowledge their youth had acquired only appeared to them an excuse for the ignorance and the indolence of maturer years. Was it to equal these that I was to labour? I felt that I already surpassed them! Was it to gain *their* good opinion, or, still worse, that of their admirers? Alas! I had too long learned to live for myself to find any happiness in the respect of the idlers I despised.

I left Oxford at the age of twenty-one. I succeeded to the large estates of my inheritance, and for the first time I felt the vanity so natural to youth when I went up to London to enjoy the resources of the Capital, and to display the powers

I possessed to revel in whatever those resources could yield. I found society like the Jewish temple: any one is admitted into its threshold; none but the chiefs of the institution into its recesses.

Young, rich, of an ancient and honourable name, pursuing pleasure rather as a necessary excitement than an occasional occupation, and agreeable to the associates I drew around me because my profusion contributed to their enjoyment, and my temper to their amusement,—I found myself courted by many, and avoided by none. I soon discovered that all civility is but the mask of design. I smiled at the kindness of the fathers who, hearing that I was talented, and knowing that I was rich, looked to my support in whatever political side they had espoused; I saw in the notes of the mothers their anxiety for the establishment of their daughters, and their respect for my acres; and in the cordiality of the sons who had horses to sell and rouge-et-noir debts to pay, I detected all that veneration for my money which implied such contempt for its possessor. By nature observant, and by misfortune sarcastic, I looked upon the various colourings of society with a searching and philosophic eye: I unravelled the intricacies which knit servility with arrogance, and meanness with ostentation; and I traced to its sources that universal vulgarity of inward sentiment and external manner, which, in all classes, appears to me to constitute the only unvarying characteristic of our countrymen. In proportion as I increased my knowledge of others, I shrunk with a deeper disappointment and dejection into my own resources. The first moment of real happiness which I experienced for a whole year was when I found myself about to seek, beneath the influence of other skies, that more extended acquaintance with my species which might either draw me to them with a closer connection, or at least reconcile me to the ties which already existed.

I will not dwell upon my adventures abroad: there is little to interest others in a recital which awakens no interest in one's self. I sought for wisdom, and I acquired but knowledge. I thirsted for the truth, the tenderness of love, and I

found but its fever and its falsehood. Like the two Florimels of Spenser, I mistook, in my delirium, the delusive fabrication of the senses for the divine reality of the heart; and I only awoke from my deceit when the phantom I had worshipped melted into snow. Whatever I pursued partook of the energy yet fitfulness of my nature. Mingling to-day in the tumults of the city, and to-morrow alone with my own heart in the solitude of unpeopled nature; now revelling in the wildest excesses, and now tracing, with a painful and unwearyed search, the intricacies of science; alternately governing others, and subdued by the tyranny which my own passions imposed, I passed through the ordeal, unshrinking yet unscathed. "The education of life," says De Staël, "perfects the thinking mind, but depraves the frivolous." I do not inquire, Monkton, to which of these classes I belong; but I feel too well, that though my mind has not been depraved, it has found no perfection but in misfortune; and that whatever be the acquirements of later years, they have nothing which can compensate for the losses of our youth.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I returned to England. I entered again upon the theatre of its world; but I mixed now more in its greater than its lesser pursuits. I looked rather at the mass than the leaven of mankind; and while I felt aversion for the few whom I knew, I glowed with philanthropy for the crowd which I knew not.

It is in contemplating men at a distance that we become benevolent. When we mix with them, we suffer by the contact, and grow, if not malicious from the injury, at least selfish from the circumspection which our safety imposes: but when, while we feel our relationship, we are not galled by the tie; when neither jealousy nor envy nor resentment are excited, we have nothing to interfere with those more complacent and kindlier sentiments which our earliest impressions have rendered natural to our hearts. We may fly men in hatred because they have galled us, but the feeling ceases

with the cause: none will willingly feed long upon bitter thoughts. It is thus that, while in the narrow circle in which we move we suffer daily from those who approach us, we can, in spite of our resentment to *them*, glow with a general benevolence to the wider relations from which we are remote; that while smarting beneath the treachery of friendship, the sting of ingratitude, the faithlessness of love, we would almost sacrifice our lives to realize some idolized theory of legislation; and that, distrustful, calculating, selfish in private, there are thousands who would, with a credulous fanaticism, fling themselves as victims before that unrecompensing Moloch which they term the Public.

Living, then, much by myself, but reflecting much upon the world, I learned to love mankind. Philanthropy brought ambition; for I was ambitious, not for my own aggrandizement, but for the service of others,—for the poor, the toiling, the degraded; these constituted that part of my fellow-beings which I the most loved, for these were bound to me by the most engaging of all human ties,—misfortune! I began to enter into the intrigues of the State; I extended my observation and inquiry from individuals to nations; I examined into the mysteries of the science which has arisen in these later days to give the lie to the wisdom of the past, to reduce into the simplicity of problems the intricacies of political knowledge, to teach us the fallacy of the system which had governed by restriction, and imagined that the happiness of nations depended upon the perpetual interference of its rulers, and to prove to us that the only unerring policy of art is to leave a free and unobstructed progress to the hidden energies and providence of Nature. But it was not only the *theoretical* investigation of the State which employed me. I mixed, though in secret, with the agents of its springs. While I seemed only intent upon pleasure, I locked in my heart the consciousness and vanity of power. In the levity of the lip I disguised the workings and the knowledge of the brain; and I looked, as with a gifted eye, upon the mysteries of the hidden depths, while I seemed to float an idler, with the herd, only on the surface of the stream.

Why was I disgusted, when I had but to put forth my hand and grasp whatever object my ambition might desire? Alas! there was in my heart always something too soft for the aims and cravings of my mind. I felt that I was wasting the young years of my life in a barren and wearisome pursuit. What to me, who had outlived vanity, would have been the admiration of the crowd? I sighed for the sympathy of *the one!* and I shrank in sadness from the prospect of renown to ask my heart for the reality of love. For what purpose, too, had I devoted myself to the service of men? As I grew more sensible of the labour of pursuing, I saw more of the inutility of accomplishing, individual measures. There is one great and moving order of events which we may retard, but we cannot arrest, and to which, if we endeavour to hasten them, we only give a dangerous and unnatural impetus. Often, when in the fever of the midnight, I have paused from my unshared and unsoftened studies, to listen to the deadly pulsation of my heart,¹ when I have felt in its painful and tumultuous beating the very life waning and wasting within me, I have sickened to my inmost soul to remember that, amongst all those whom I was exhausting the health and enjoyment of youth to benefit, there was not one for whom my life had an interest, or by whom my death would be honoured by a tear. There is a beautiful passage in Chalmers on the want of sympathy we experience in the world. From my earliest childhood I had one deep, engrossing, yearning desire,—and that was to love and to be loved. I found, too young, the realization of that dream; it passed! and I have never known it again. The experience of long and bitter years teaches me to look with suspicion on that far recollection of the past, and to doubt if this earth could indeed produce a living form to satisfy the visions of one who has dwelt among the boyish creations of fancy,—who has shaped out in his heart an imaginary idol, arrayed it in whatever is most beautiful in nature, and breathed into the image the pure but burning spirit of that innate love from which it

¹ Falkland suffered much, from very early youth, from a complaint in his heart.

sprung! It is true that my manhood has been the undeceiver of my youth, and that the meditation upon facts has disenthralled me from the visionary broodings over fiction; but what remuneration have I found in reality? If the line of the satirist be not true,—

“Souvent de tous nos maux la raison est le pire,”¹—

at least, like the madman of whom he speaks, I owe but little gratitude to the act which, “in drawing me from my error, has robbed me also of a paradise.”

I am approaching the conclusion of my confessions. Men who have no ties in the world, and who have been accustomed to solitude, find, with every disappointment in the former, a greater yearning for the enjoyments which the latter can afford. Day by day I relapsed more into myself; “Man delighted me not, nor woman either.” In my ambition, it was not in the means, but the end, that I was disappointed. In my friends, I complained not of treachery, but insipidity; and it was not because I was deserted, but wearied by more tender connections, that I ceased to find either excitement in seeking, or triumph in obtaining, their love. It was not, then, in a momentary disgust, but rather in the calm of satiety, that I formed that resolution of retirement which I have adopted now.

Shrinking from my kind, but too young to live wholly for myself, I have made a new tie with Nature; I have come to cement it here. I am like a bird which has wandered afar, but has returned home to its nest at last. But there is one feeling which had its origin in the world, and which accompanies me still; which consecrates my recollections of the past; which contributes to take its gloom from the solitude of the present. Do you ask me its nature, Monkton? It is my friendship for you.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I wish that I could convey to you, dear Monkton, the faintest idea of the pleasures of indolence. You belong to that

¹ Boileau.

class which is of all the most busy, though the least active. Men of pleasure never have time for anything. No lawyer, no statesman, no bustling, hurrying, restless underling of the counter or the Exchange, is so eternally occupied as a lounging "about town." He is linked to labour by a series of undefinable nothings. His independence and idleness only serve to fetter and engross him, and his leisure seems held upon the condition of never having a moment to himself. Would that you could see me at this instant in the luxury of my summer retreat, surrounded by the trees, the waters, the wild birds, and the hum, the glow, the exultation which teem visibly and audibly through creation in the noon of a summer's day! I am undisturbed by a single intruder. I am unoccupied by a single pursuit. I suffer one moment to glide into another, without the remembrance that the next must be filled up by some laborious pleasure, or some wearisome enjoyment. It is here that I feel all the powers, and gather together all the resources, of my mind. I recall my recollections of men; and, unbiased by the passions and prejudices which we do not experience *alone*, because their very existence depends upon others, I endeavour to perfect my knowledge of the human heart. He who would acquire that better science must arrange and analyze in private the experience he has collected in the crowd. Alas, Monkton, when you have expressed surprise at the gloom which is so habitual to my temper, did it never occur to you that my acquaintance with the world would alone be sufficient to account for it? — that knowledge is neither for the good nor the happy. Who can touch pitch, and not be defiled? Who can look upon the workings of grief and rejoice, or associate with guilt and be pure?

It has been by mingling with men, not only in their *haunts* but their *emotions*, that I have learned to know them. I have descended into the receptacles of vice; I have taken lessons from the brothel and the hell; I have watched feeling in its unguarded sallies, and drawn from the impulse of the moment conclusions which gave the lie to the previous conduct of years. But all knowledge brings us disappointment,

and *this* knowledge the most; the satiety of good, the suspicion of evil, the decay of our young dreams, the premature iciness of age, the reckless, aimless, joyless indifference which follows an overwrought and feverish excitation, — *these* constitute the lot of men who have renounced *hope* in the acquisition of *thought*, and who, in learning the motives of human actions, learn only to despise the persons and the things which enchanted them like divinities before.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I told you, dear Monkton, in my first letter, of my favourite retreat in Mr. Mandeville's grounds. I have grown so attached to it, that I spend the greater part of the day there. I am not one of those persons who always perambulate with a book in their hands, as if neither Nature nor their own reflections could afford them any rational amusement. I go there more frequently *en paresseux* than *en savant*: a small brooklet which runs through the grounds broadens at last into a deep, clear, transparent lake. Here fir and elm and oak fling their branches over the margin; and beneath their shade I pass all the hours of noon-day in the luxuries of a dreamer's reverie. It is true, however, that I am never less idle than when I appear the most so. I am like Prospero in his desert island, and surround myself with spirits. A spell trembles upon the leaves; every wave comes fraught to me with its peculiar music: and an Ariel seems to whisper the secrets of every breeze, which comes to my forehead laden with the perfumes of the West. But do not think, Monkton, that it is only good spirits which haunt the recesses of my solitude. To push the metaphor to exaggeration, Memory is my Sycorax, and Gloom is the Caliban she conceives. But let me digress from myself to my less idle occupations; I have of late diverted my thoughts in some measure by a recurrence to a study to which I once was particularly devoted, — history. Have you ever remarked that people who live the most by themselves reflect the most upon others; and that he who lives surrounded by the million never thinks of any

but the one individual, himself? Philosophers, moralists, historians, whose thoughts, labours, lives, have been devoted to the consideration of mankind, or the analysis of public events, have usually been remarkably attached to solitude and seclusion. We are indeed so linked to our fellow-beings, that, where we are not chained to them by action, we are carried to and connected with them by thought.

I have just quitted the observations of my favourite Bolingbroke upon history. I cannot agree with him as to its utility. The more I consider, the more I am convinced that its study has been upon the whole pernicious to mankind. It is by those details, which are always as unfair in their inference as they must evidently be doubtful in their facts, that party animosity and general prejudice are supported and sustained. There is not one abuse, one intolerance, one remnant of ancient barbarity and ignorance existing at the present day, which is not advocated, and actually confirmed, by some vague deduction from the bigotry of an illiterate chronicler, or the obscurity of an uncertain legend. It is through the constant appeal to our ancestors that we transmit wretchedness and wrong to our posterity: we should require, to corroborate an evil originating in the present day, the clearest and most satisfactory proof; but the minutest defence is sufficient for an evil handed down to us by the barbarism of antiquity. We reason from what even in old times was dubious, as if we were adducing what was certain in those in which we live. And thus we have made no sanction to abuses so powerful as history, and no enemy to the present like the past.

FROM THE LADY EMILY MANDEVILLE TO MRS. ST. JOHN.

At last, my dear Julia, I am settled in my beautiful retreat. Mrs. Dalton and Lady Margaret Leslie are all whom I could prevail upon to accompany me. Mr. Mandeville is full of the corn-laws. He is chosen chairman to a select committee in the House. He is murmuring agricultural distresses in his sleep; and when I asked him occasionally to come down here

to see me, he started from a reverie, and exclaimed, "Never, Mr. Speaker, as a landed proprietor, — never will I consent to my own ruin."

My boy, my own, my beautiful companion, is with me. I wish you could see how fast he can run, and how sensibly he can talk. "What a fine figure he has for his age!" said I to Mr. Mandeville the other day. "Figure! age!" said his father; "in the House of Commons he shall make a figure to every age." I know that in writing to you, you will not be contented if I do not say a great deal about myself. I shall therefore proceed to tell you that I feel already much better from the air and exercise of the journey, from the conversation of my two guests, and, above all, from the constant society of my dear boy. He was three last birthday. I think that at the age of twenty-one, I am the more childish of the two. Pray remember me to all in town who have not quite forgotten me. Beg Lady —— to send Elizabeth a subscription ticket for Almack's, and — oh, talking of Almack's, I think my boy's eyes are even more blue and beautiful than Lady C——'s.

Adieu, my dear Julia,

Ever, etc.

E. M.

Lady Emily Mandeville was the daughter of the Duke of Lindvale. She married at the age of sixteen a man of large fortune, and some parliamentary reputation. Neither in person nor in character was he much beneath or above the ordinary standard of men. He was one of Nature's Macadamized achievements. His great fault was his equality; and you longed for a hill though it were to climb, or a stone though it were in your way. Love attaches itself to something prominent, even if that something be what others would hate. One can scarcely feel extremes for mediocrity. The few years Lady Emily had been married had but little altered her character. Quick in feeling, though regulated in temper; gay, less from levity, than from that first *spring-tide* of a heart which has never yet known occasion to be sad; beautiful and

pure, as an enthusiast's dream of heaven, yet bearing within the latent and powerful passion and tenderness of earth,—she mixed with all a simplicity and innocence which the extreme earliness of her marriage, and the ascetic temper of her husband, had tended less to diminish than increase. She had much of what is termed genius,—its warmth of emotion, its vividness of conception, its admiration for the grand, its affection for the good, and that dangerous contempt for whatever is mean and worthless, the very indulgence of which is an offence against the habits of the world. Her tastes were, however, too feminine and chaste ever to render her eccentric: they were rather calculated to conceal than to publish the deeper recesses of her nature; and it was beneath that polished surface of manner common to those with whom she mixed that she hid the treasures of a mine which no human eye had beheld.

Her health, naturally delicate, had lately suffered much from the dissipation of London, and it was by the advice of her physicians that she had now come to spend the summer at E——. Lady Margaret Leslie, who was old enough to be tired with the caprices of society, and Mrs. Dalton, who, having just lost her husband, was forbidden at present to partake of its amusements, had agreed to accompany her to her retreat. Neither of them was perhaps much suited to Emily's temper, but youth and spirits make almost any one congenial to us: it is from the years which confirm our habits, and the reflections which refine our taste, that it becomes easy to revolt us, and difficult to please.

On the third day after Emily's arrival at E——, she was sitting after breakfast with Lady Margaret and Mrs. Dalton. "Pray," said the former, "did you ever meet my relation, Mr. Falkland? He is in your immediate neighbourhood."

"Never; though I have a great curiosity: that fine old ruin beyond the village belongs to him, I believe."

"It does. You ought to know him; you would like him so!"

"Like him!" repeated Mrs. Dalton, who was one of those persons of *ton* who, though everything collectively, are nothing individually,—"like him? Impossible!"

"Why?" said Lady Margaret, indignantly; "he has every requisite to please, — youth, talent, fascination of manner, and great knowledge of the world."

"Well," said Mrs. Dalton, "I cannot say I discovered his perfections. He seemed to me conceited and satirical, and— and—in short, very disagreeable; *but then, to be sure, I have only seen him once.*"

"I have heard many accounts of him," said Emily, "all differing from each other; I think, however, that the generality of people rather incline to Mrs. Dalton's opinion than to yours, Lady Margaret."

"I can easily believe it. It is very seldom that he takes the trouble to please; but when he does, he is irresistible. Very little, however, is generally known respecting him. Since he came of age, he has been much abroad; and when in England, he never entered with eagerness into society. He is supposed to possess very extraordinary powers, which, added to his large fortune and ancient name, have procured him a consideration and rank rarely enjoyed by one so young. He had refused repeated offers to enter into public life; but he is very intimate with one of the ministers, who, it is said, has had the address to profit much by his abilities. All other particulars concerning him are extremely uncertain. Of his person and manners you had better judge yourself; for I am sure, Emily, that my petition for inviting him here is already granted."

"By all means," said Emily; "you cannot be more anxious to see him than I am."

And so the conversation dropped. Lady Margaret went to the library; Mrs. Dalton seated herself on the ottoman, dividing her attention between the last novel and her Italian grayhound; and Emily left the room in order to revisit her former and favourite haunts. Her young son was her companion, and she was not sorry that he was her only one. To be the instructress of an infant a mother should be its playmate; and Emily was, perhaps, wiser than she imagined when she ran with a laughing eye and a light foot over the grass, occupying herself almost with the same earnestness as her child in the

same infantine amusements. As they passed the wood which led to the lake at the bottom of the grounds, the boy, who was before Emily, suddenly stopped. She came hastily up to him; and scarcely two paces before, though half hid by the steep bank of the lake beneath which he reclined, she saw a man apparently asleep. A volume of Shakspeare lay beside him; the child had seized it. As she took it from him in order to replace it, her eye rested upon the passage the boy had accidentally opened. How often in after days was that passage recalled as an omen! It was the following,—

“Ah me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth!”¹

As she laid the book gently down she caught a glimpse of the countenance of the sleeper; never did she forget the expression which it wore,— stern, proud, mournful even in repose!

She did not wait for him to wake. She hurried home through the trees. All that day she was silent and abstracted; the face haunted her like a dream. Strange as it may seem, she spoke neither to Lady Margaret nor to Mrs. Dalton of her adventure. *Why?* Is there in our hearts any prescience of their misfortunes?

On the next day, Falkland, who had received and accepted Lady Margaret's invitation, was expected to dinner. Emily felt a strong yet excusable curiosity to see one of whom she had heard so many and such contradictory reports. She was alone in the saloon when he entered. At the first glance she recognized the person she had met by the lake on the day before, and she blushed deeply as she replied to his salutation. To her great relief Lady Margaret and Mrs. Dalton entered in a few minutes, and the conversation grew general.

Falkland had but little of what is called animation in manner; but his wit, though it rarely led to mirth, was sarcastic yet refined, and the vividness of his imagination

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

threw a brilliancy and originality over remarks which in others might have been commonplace and tame.

The conversation turned chiefly upon society; and though Lady Margaret had told her he had entered but little into its ordinary routine, Emily was struck alike by his accurate acquaintance with men, and the justice of his reflections upon manners. There also mingled with his satire an occasional melancholy of feeling, which appeared to Emily the more touching because it was always unexpected and unassumed. It was after one of these remarks, that for the first time she ventured to examine into the charm and peculiarity of the countenance of the speaker. There was spread over it that expression of mingled energy and languor, which betokens that much, whether of thought, sorrow, passion, or action, has been undergone, but resisted; has wearied, but not subdued. In the broad and noble brow, in the chiselled lip, and the melancholy depths of the calm and thoughtful eye, there sat a resolution and a power, which, though mournful, were not without their pride; which, if they had borne the worst, had also defied it. Notwithstanding his mother's country, his complexion was fair and pale; and his hair, of a light chestnut, fell in large *antique* curls over his forehead. That forehead, indeed, constituted the principal feature of his countenance. It was neither in its height nor expansion alone that its remarkable beauty consisted; but if ever thought to conceive and courage to execute high designs were embodied and visible, they were imprinted *there*.

Falkland did not stay long after dinner; but to Lady Margaret he promised all that she required of future length and frequency in his visits. When he left the room, Lady Emily went instinctively to the window to watch him depart; and all that night his low soft voice rung in her ear, like the music of an indistinct and half-remembered dream.

FROM MR. MANDEVILLE TO LADY EMILY.

DEAR EMILY, — Business of great importance to the country has prevented my writing to you before. I hope you have continued well since I heard from you last, and that you do all you can to preserve that retrenchment of unnecessary expenses, and observe that attention to a prudent economy, which is no less incumbent upon individuals than nations.

Thinking that you must be dull at E——, and ever anxious both to entertain and to improve you, I send you an excellent publication by Mr. Tooke,¹ together with my own two last speeches, corrected by myself.

Trusting to hear from you soon, I am, with best love to
Henry

Very affectionately yours,

JOHN MANDEVILLE.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON.

FREDERICK MONKTON.²

Well, Monkton, I have been to E——; that important event in my monastic life has been concluded. Lady Margaret was as talkative as usual; and a Mrs. Dalton, who, I find, is an acquaintance of yours, asked very tenderly after your poodle and yourself. But Lady Emily! Ay, Monkton, I know not well how to describe *her* to you. Her beauty interests not less than it dazzles. There is that deep and eloquent softness in her every word and action, which, of all charms, is the most dangerous. Yet she is rather of a playful than of the melancholy and pensive nature which generally accompanies such gentleness of manner; but there is no levity in her character, nor is that playfulness of spirit ever carried into the exhilaration of what we call "mirth." She seems, if I may use the antithesis, at once too feeling to be

¹ The Political Economist.

² A letter from Falkland, mentioning Lady Margaret's invitation, has been omitted.

gay, and too innocent to be sad. I remember having frequently met her husband. Cold and pompous, without anything to interest the imagination, or engage the affections, I am not able to conceive a person less congenial to his beautiful and romantic wife. But she must have been exceedingly young when she married him; and she, probably, knows not yet that she is to be pitied, because she has not yet learned that she can love.

*“Le veggio in fronte amor come in suo seggio
Sul crin, negli occhi — su le labra amore
Sol d'intorno al suo cuore amor non veggio.”*

I have been twice to her house since my first admission there. I love to listen to that soft and enchanting voice, and to escape from the gloom of my own reflections to the brightness, yet simplicity, of hers. In my earlier days this comfort would have been attended with danger; but we grow callous from the excess of feeling. We cannot re-illumine ashes. I can gaze upon her dream-like beauty, and not experience a single desire which can sully the purity of my worship. I listen to her voice when it melts in endearment over her birds, her flowers, or, in a deeper devotion, over her child; but my heart does not thrill at the tenderness of the sound. I touch her hand, and the pulses of my own are as calm as before. Satiety of the past is our best safeguard from the temptations of the future; and the perils of youth are over when it has acquired that dulness and apathy of affection which should belong only to the insensibility of age.

Such were Falkland's opinions at the time he wrote. Ah! what is so delusive as our affections? Our security is our danger,—our defiance our defeat! Day after day he went to E——. He passed the mornings in making excursions with Emily over that wild and romantic country by which they were surrounded; and in the dangerous but delicious stillness of the summer twilights, they listened to the first whispers of their hearts.

In his relationship to Lady Margaret, Falkland found his excuse for the frequency of his visits; and even Mrs. Dalton was so charmed with the fascination of his manner, that (in spite of her previous dislike) she forgot to inquire how far his intimacy at E—— was at variance with the proprieties of the world she worshipped, or in what proportion it was connected with herself.

It is needless for me to trace through all its windings the formation of that affection, the subsequent records of which I am about to relate. What is so unearthly, so beautiful, as the first birth of a woman's love? The air of heaven is not purer in its wanderings, its sunshine not more holy in its warmth. Oh! why should it deteriorate in its nature even while it increases in its degree? Why should the step which *prints, sully* also the snow? How often, when Falkland met that guiltless yet thrilling eye, which revealed to him those internal secrets that Emily was yet awhile too happy to discover; when, like a fountain among flowers, the goodness of her heart flowed over the softness of her manner to those around her, and the benevolence of her actions to those beneath,—how often he turned away with a veneration too deep for the selfishness of human passion, and a tenderness too sacred for its desires! It was in this temper (the earliest and the most fruitless prognostic of real love) that the following letter was written:—

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON. FREDERICK MONKTTON.

I have had two or three admonitory letters from my uncle.

"The summer [he says] is advancing, yet you remain stationary in your indolence. There is still a great part of Europe which you have not seen; and since you will neither enter society for a wife, nor the House of Commons for fame, spend your life, at least while it is yet free and unshackled, in those active pursuits which will render idleness hereafter more sweet; or in that observation and enjoyment among others, which will increase your resources in yourself."

All this sounds well; but I have already acquired more knowledge than will be of use either to others or myself, and

I am not willing to lose *tranquillity* here for the chance of obtaining *pleasure* elsewhere. Pleasure is indeed a holiday sensation which does not occur in ordinary life. We lose the peace of years when we hunt after the rapture of moments.

I do not know if you ever felt that existence was ebbing away without being put to its full value; as for me, I am never conscious of life without being also conscious that it is not enjoyed to the utmost. This is a bitter feeling, and its worst bitterness is our ignorance how to remove it. My indolence I neither seek nor wish to defend, yet it is rather from necessity than choice: it seems to me that there is nothing in the world to arouse me. I only ask for action, but I can find no motive sufficient to excite it. Let me then, in my indolence, not, like the world, be idle, yet dependent on others, but at least dignify the failing by some appearance of that freedom which retirement only can bestow.

My seclusion is no longer solitude; yet I do not value it the less. I spend a great portion of my time at E—. Loneliness is attractive to men of reflection, not so much because they like their own thoughts, as because they dislike the thoughts of others. Solitude ceases to charm the moment we can find a single being whose ideas are more agreeable to us than our own. I have not, I think, yet described to you the person of Lady Emily. She is tall, and slightly, yet beautifully, formed. The ill health which obliged her to leave London for E— in the height of the season, has given her cheek a more delicate hue than I should think it naturally wore. Her eyes are light, but their lashes are long and dark; her hair is black and luxuriant, and worn in a fashion peculiar to herself; but her manners, Monkton! how can I convey to you their fascination? So simple, and therefore so faultless, so modest, and yet so tender, she seems, in acquiring the intelligence of the woman, to have only perfected the purity of the child; and now, after all that I have said, I am only more deeply sensible of the truth of Bacon's observation, that "the best part of beauty is that which no picture can express." I am loth to finish this description, because it seems to me scarcely begun; I am unwilling to con-

tinue it, because every word seems to show me more clearly those recesses of my heart, which I would have hidden even from myself. I do not *yet* love, it is true, for the time is past when I was lightly moved to passion; but I will not incur that danger, the probability of which I am seer enough to foresee. Never shall that pure and innocent heart be sullied by one who would die to shield it from the lightest misfortune. I find in myself a powerful seconder to my uncle's wishes. I shall be in London next week; till then, farewell.

E. F.

When the proverb said that "Jove laughs at lovers' vows," it meant not (as in the ordinary construction) a sarcasm on their insincerity, but *inconsistency*. We deceive others far less than we deceive ourselves. What to Falkland were resolutions which a word, a glance, could overthrow? In the world he might have dissipated his thoughts: in loneliness he concentrated them; for the passions are like the sounds of Nature, only heard in her solitude. He lulled his soul to the reproaches of his conscience; he surrendered himself to the intoxication of so golden a dream; and amidst those beautiful scenes there arose, as an offering to the summer heaven, the incense of two hearts which had, through those very fires so guilty in themselves, purified and ennobled every other emotion they had conceived.

"God made the country, and man made the town,"

says the hackneyed quotation; and the feelings awakened in each differ with the genius of the place. Who can compare the frittered and divided affections formed in cities with that which crowds cannot distract by opposing temptations, or dissipation infect with its frivolities?

I have often thought that had the execution of Atala equalled its design, no human work could have surpassed it in its grandeur. What picture is more simple, though more sublime, than the vast solitude of an unpeopled wilderness, the woods, the mountains, the face of Nature, cast in the

fresh yet giant mould of a new and unpolluted world; and, amidst those most silent and mighty temples of THE GREAT GOD, the lone spirit of Love reigning and brightening over all?

BOOK II.

It is dangerous for women, however wise it be for men, "to commune with their own hearts, and to be still!" Continuing to pursue the follies of the world had been to Emily more prudent than to fly them; to pause, to separate herself from the herd, was to discover, to feel, to murmur at the vacuum of her being; and to occupy it with the feelings which it craved could in her be but the hoarding a provision for despair.

Married, before she had begun the bitter knowledge of *herself*; to a man whom it was impossible to love, yet deriving from nature a tenderness of soul which shed itself over everything around, her only escape from misery had been in the dormancy of feeling. The birth of her son had opened to her a new field of sensations, and she drew the best charm of her own existence from the life she had given to another. Had she not met Falkland, all the deeper sources of affection would have flowed into one only and legitimate channel; but those whom *he* wished to fascinate had never resisted his power, and the attachment he inspired was in proportion to the strength and ardour of his own nature.

It was not for Emily Mandeville to love such as Falkland without feeling that from that moment a separate and selfish existence had ceased to *be*. Our senses may captivate us with beauty; but in absence we forget, or by reason we can conquer, so superficial an impression. Our vanity may enamour us with rank; but the affections of vanity are traced in sand. But who can love *Genius*, and not feel that the sentiments it excites partake of its own intenseness and its own immortal-

ity? It arouses, concentrates, engrosses all our emotions, even to the most subtle and concealed. Love what is common, and ordinary objects can replace or destroy a sentiment which an ordinary object has awakened. Love what we shall not meet again amidst the littleness and insipidity which surround us, and where can we turn for a new object to replace that which has no parallel upon earth? The recovery from such a delirium is like return from a fairy-land; and still fresh in the recollections of a bright and immortal clime, how can we endure the dulness of that human existence to which for the future we are condemned?

It was some weeks since Emily had written to Mrs. St. John; and her last letter, in mentioning Falkland, had spoken of him with a reserve which rather alarmed than deceived her friend. Mrs. St. John had indeed a strong and secret reason for fear. Falkland had been the object of her own and her earliest attachment, and she knew well the singular and mysterious power which he exercised at will over the mind. He had, it is true, never returned, nor even known of, her feelings towards him; and during the years which had elapsed since she last saw him, and in the new scenes which her marriage with Mr. St. John had opened, she had almost forgotten her early attachment, when Lady Emily's letter renewed its remembrance. She wrote in answer an impassioned and affectionate caution to her friend. She spoke much (after complaining of Emily's late silence) in condemnation of the character of Falkland, and in warning of its fascinations; and she attempted to arouse alike the virtue and the pride which so often triumph in alliance, when separately they would so easily fail. In this Mrs. St. John probably imagined she was actuated solely by friendship; but in the best actions there is always some latent evil in the motive; and the selfishness of a jealousy, though hopeless not conquered, perhaps predominated over the less interested feelings which were all that she acknowledged to herself.

In this work it has been my object to portray the progress of the passions; to chronicle a history rather by thoughts and feelings than by incidents and events; and to lay open those

minuter and more subtle mazes and secrets of the human heart, which in modern writings have been so sparingly exposed. It is with this view that I have from time to time broken the thread of narration, in order to bring forward more vividly the characters it contains; and in laying no claim to the ordinary ambition of tale-writers, I have deemed myself at liberty to deviate from the ordinary courses they pursue. Hence the motive and the excuse for the insertion of the following extracts, and of occasional letters. They portray the interior struggle when Narration would look only to the external event, and trace the lightning "home to its cloud," when History would only mark the spot where it scorched or destroyed.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

Tuesday.— More than seven years have passed since I began this journal! I have just been looking over it from the commencement. Many and various are the feelings which it attempts to describe,— anger, pique, joy, sorrow, hope, pleasure, weariness, *ennui*; but never, never once, humiliation or remorse!— these were not doomed to be my portion in the bright years of my earliest youth. How shall I describe them now? I have received — I have read, as well as my tears would let me — a long letter from Julia. It is true that I have not dared to write to her: when shall I answer this? She has shown me the state of my heart; I more than suspected it before. Could I have dreamed two months — six weeks — since that I should have a single feeling of which I could be ashamed? *He* has just been here,— *he*, the only one in the world, for all the world seems concentrated in him. He observed my distress, for I looked on him; and my lips quivered and my eyes were full of tears. He came to me, he sat next to me, he whispered his interest, his anxiety — and was this all? Have I loved before I even knew that I was beloved? No, no; the tongue was silent, but the eye, the cheek, the manner — alas! *these* have been but too eloquent!

Wednesday. — It was so sweet to listen to his low and tender voice; to watch the expression of his countenance,— even to breathe the air that he inhaled. But now that I know its cause, I feel that this pleasure is a crime, and I am miserable even when he is with me. He has not been here to-day. It is past three. Will he come? I rise from my seat; I go to the window for breath; I am restless, agitated, disturbed. Lady Margaret speaks to me,— I scarcely answer her. My boy — yes, my dear, dear Henry comes, and I feel that I am again a mother. Never will I betray that duty, though I have forgotten one as sacred, though less dear! Never shall my son have cause to blush for his parent! I will fly hence,— I will see *him* no more!

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON.
FREDERICK MONKTON.

Write to me, Monkton,— exhort me, admonish me, or forsake me forever. I am happy, yet wretched; I wander in the delirium of a fatal fever, in which I see dreams of a brighter life, but every one of them only brings me nearer to death. Day after day I have lingered here, until weeks have flown—and for what? Emily is not like the women of the world; virtue, honour, faith, are not to her the mere *convenances* of society. “There is no crime,” said Lady A., “where there is concealment.” Such can never be the creed of Emily Mandeville. She will not disguise guilt either in the levity of the world or in the affectations of sentiment. She will be wretched, and forever. *I hold the destinies of her future life, and yet I am base enough to hesitate whether to save or destroy her.* Oh, how fearful, how selfish, how degrading is unlawful love!

You know my theoretical benevolence for everything that lives; you have often smiled at its vanity. I see now that you were right; for it seems to me almost superhuman virtue not to destroy the person who is dearest to me on earth.

I remember writing to you some weeks since that I would come to London. Little did I know of the weakness of my

own mind. I told her that I intended to depart. She turned pale, she trembled; but she did not speak. Those signs which should have hastened my departure have taken away the strength even to think of it.

I am here still! I go to E—— every day. Sometimes we sit in silence; I dare not trust myself to speak. How dangerous are such moments! “Ammutiscon lingue parlen l’alme.”

Yesterday they left us alone. We had been conversing with Lady Margaret on indifferent subjects. There was a pause for some minutes. I looked up; Lady Margaret had left the room. The blood rushed into my cheek; my eyes met Emily’s; I would have given worlds to have repeated with my lips what those eyes expressed. I could not even speak,—I felt choked with contending emotions. There was not a breath stirring; I heard my very heart beat. A thunderbolt would have been a relief. O God! if there be a curse, it is to burn, swell, madden with feelings which you are doomed to conceal! This is, indeed, to be “a cannibal of one’s own heart.”¹

It was sunset. Emily was alone upon the lawn which sloped towards the lake, and the blue still waters beneath broke, at bright intervals, through the scattered and illuminated trees. She stood watching the sun sink with wistful and tearful eyes. Her soul was sad within her. The ivy which love first wreathes around his work had already faded away, and she now only saw the desolation of the ruin it concealed. Never more for her was that freshness of unawakened feeling which invests all things with a perpetual daybreak of sunshine and incense and dew. The heart may survive the decay or rupture of an innocent and lawful affection,—“la marque reste, mais la blessure guérit,”—but the love of darkness and guilt is branded in a character ineffaceable, eternal! The one is, like lightning, more likely to dazzle than to destroy, and, divine even in its danger, it *makes holy what it sears*;² but the other is like that sure and

¹ Bacon.

² According to the ancient superstition.

deadly fire which fell upon the cities of old, graving in the barrenness of the desert it had wrought the record and perpetuation of a curse. A low and thrilling voice stole upon Emily's ear. She turned,— Falkland stood beside her.

"I felt restless and unhappy," he said, "and I came to seek you. If (writes one of the fathers) a guilty and wretched man could behold, though only for a few minutes, the countenance of an angel, the calm and glory which it wears would so sink into his heart, that he would pass at once over the gulf of gone years into his first unsullied state of purity and hope; perhaps I thought of that sentence when I came to you."

"I know not," said Emily, with a deep blush at this address, which formed her only answer to the compliment it conveyed,— "I know not why it is, but to me there is always something melancholy in this hour,— something mournful in seeing the beautiful day die with all its pomp and music, its sunshine, and songs of birds."

"And yet," replied Falkland, "if I remember the time when my feelings were more in unison with yours (for at present external objects have lost for me much of their influence and attraction), the melancholy you perceive has in it a vague and ineffable sweetness not to be exchanged for more exhilarated spirits. The melancholy which arises from no cause within ourselves is like music,— it enchant us in proportion to its effect upon our feelings. Perhaps its chief charm (though this it requires the contamination of after years before we can fathom and define) is in the purity of the sources it springs from. Our feelings can be but little sullied and worn while they can yet respond to the passionless and primal sympathies of Nature; and the sadness you speak of is so void of bitterness, so allied to the best and most delicious sensations we enjoy, that I should imagine the *very happiness of heaven partook rather of melancholy than mirth.*"

There was a pause of some moments. It was rarely that Falkland alluded even so slightly to the futurity of another world; and when he did, it was never in a careless and commonplace manner, but in a tone which sank deep into Emily's

heart. "Look," she said, at length, "at that beautiful star,—the first and brightest! I have often thought it was like the promise of life beyond the tomb,—a pledge to us that, even in the depths of midnight, the earth shall have a light, unquenched and unquenchable, from Heaven!"

Emily turned to Falkland as she said this, and her countenance sparkled with the enthusiasm she felt. But his face was deadly pale. There went over it, like a cloud, an expression of changeful and unutterable thought; and then, passing suddenly away, it left his features calm and bright in all their noble and intellectual beauty. Her soul yearned to him, as she looked, with the tenderness of a sister.

They walked slowly towards the house. "I have frequently," said Emily, with some hesitation, "been surprised at the little enthusiasm you appear to possess even upon subjects where your conviction must be strong."

"*I have thought enthusiasm away!*" replied Falkland; "it was the loss of hope which brought me reflection, and in reflection I forgot to feel. Would that I had not found it so easy to recall what I thought I had lost forever!"

Falkland's cheek changed as he said this, and Emily sighed faintly, for she felt his meaning. In him that allusion to his love had aroused a whole train of dangerous recollections; for Passion is the avalanche of the human heart,—*a single breath can dissolve it from its repose.*

They remained silent; for Falkland would not trust himself to speak, till, when they reached the house, he faltered out his excuses for not entering, and departed. He turned towards his solitary home. The grounds at E—— had been laid out in a classical and costly manner, which contrasted forcibly with the wild and simple nature of the surrounding scenery. Even the short distance between Mr. Mandeville's house and L—— wrought as distinct a change in the character of the country as any length of space could have effected. Falkland's ancient and ruinous abode, with its shattered arches and moss-grown parapets, was situated on a gentle declivity, and surrounded by dark elm and larch trees. It still retained some traces both of its former consequence, and

of the perils to which that consequence had exposed it. A broad ditch, overgrown with weeds, indicated the remains of what once had been a moat; and huge rough stones, scattered around it, spoke of the outworks the fortification had anciently possessed, and the stout resistance they had made in "the Parliament Wars" to the sturdy followers of Ireton and Fairfax. The moon, that flatterer of decay, shed its rich and softening beauty over a spot which else had, indeed, been desolate and cheerless, and kissed into light the long and unwaving herbage which rose at intervals from the ruins, like the false parasites of fallen greatness. But for Falkland the scene had no interest or charm, and he turned with a careless and unheeding eye to his customary apartment. It was the only one in the house furnished with luxury, or even comfort. Large bookcases, inlaid with curious carvings in ivory; busts of the few public characters the world had ever produced worthy, in Falkland's estimation, of the homage of posterity; elaborately-wrought hangings from Flemish looms; and French *fauteuils* and sofas of rich damask, and massive gilding (relics of the magnificent days of Louis Quatorze), bespoke a costliness of design suited rather to Falkland's wealth than to the ordinary simplicity of his tastes.

A large writing-table was overspread with books in various languages, and upon the most opposite subjects. Letters and papers were scattered amongst them; Falkland turned carelessly over the latter. One of the epistolary communications was from Lord —, the —. He smiled bitterly, as he read the exaggerated compliments it contained, and saw to the bottom of the shallow artifice they were meant to conceal. He tossed the letter from him, and opened the scattered volumes, one after another, with that languid and sated feeling common to all men who have read deeply enough to feel how much they have learned, and how little they know.

"We pass our lives," thought he, "in sowing what we are never to reap! We endeavour to erect a tower, which shall reach the heavens, in order to escape *one* curse, and lo! we are smitten by *another*! We would soar from a common evil, and from that moment *we are divided by a separate language*

from our race! Learning, science, philosophy, the world of men and of imagination, I ransacked—and for what? I centred my happiness in wisdom. I looked upon the aims of others with a scornful and loathing eye. I held commune with those who have gone before me; I dwelt among the monuments of their minds, and made their records familiar to me as friends; I penetrated the womb of nature, and went with the secret elements to their home; I arraigned the stars before me, and learned the method and the mystery of their courses; I asked the tempest its bourn, and questioned the winds of their path. This was not sufficient to satisfy my thirst for knowledge, and I searched in this lower world for new sources to content it. Unseen and unsuspected, I saw and agitated the springs of the automaton that we call ‘the Mind.’ I found a clew for the labyrinth of human motives, and I surveyed the hearts of those around me as through a glass. Vanity of vanities! What have I acquired? I have separated myself from my kind, but not from those worst enemies, my passions! I have made a solitude of my soul, but I have not mocked it with the appellation of Peace.¹ In flying the herd, I have not escaped from myself; like the wounded deer, the barb was within me, and *that I could not fly!*”

With these thoughts he turned from his reverie, and once more endeavoured to charm his own reflections by those which ought to speak to us of quiet, for they are graven on the pages of the dead; but his attempts were as idle as before. His thoughts were still wandering and confused, and could neither be quieted nor collected; he read, but he scarcely distinguished one page from another; he wrote,—the ideas refused to flow at his call; and the only effort at connecting his feelings which even partially succeeded, was in the verses which I am about to place before the reader. It is a common property of poetry, however imperfectly the gift be possessed, to speak to the hearts of others in proportion as the sentiments it would express are felt in our own; and I subjoin the lines which bear the date of that evening, in the

¹ Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant. — TACITUS.

They make a solitude, and call it peace. — BYRON.

hope that, more than many pages, they will show the morbid yet original character of the writer, and the particular sources of feeling from which they took the bitterness that pervades them.

KNOWLEDGE.

Ergo hominum genus incassum frustraque laborat
Semper, et in curis consumit inanibus aevum. — LUCRETIUS.

'T is midnight ! Round the lamp which o'er
My chamber sheds its lonely beam,
Is wisely spread the varied lore
Which feeds in youth our feverish dream,—

The dream, the thirst, the wild desire,
Delirious yet divine, to *know* ;
Around to roam, above aspire,
And drink the breath of Heaven below !

From Ocean, Earth, the Stars, the Sky,
To lift mysterious Nature's pall ;
And bare before the kindling eye
In MAN the darkest mist of all !

Alas ! what boots the midnight oil ?
The madness of the struggling mind ?
Oh, vague the hope, and vain the toil,
Which only leave us doubly blind !

What learn we from the Past ? — the same
Dull course of glory, guilt, and gloom :
I asked the Future, and there came
No voice from its unfathomed womb.

The Sun was silent, and the wave ;
The air but answered with its breath ;
But Earth was kind ; and from the grave
Arose the eternal answer, — *Death* !

And *this* was all ! We need no sage
To teach us Nature's only truth !
O fools ! o'er Wisdom's idle page
To waste the hours of golden youth !

In Science wildly do we seek
What only withering years should bring, —
The languid pulse, the feverish cheek,
The spirits drooping on their wing !

*To think — is but to learn to groan;
To scorn what all beside adore;
To feel amid the world alone,
An alien on a desert shore;*

*To lose the only ties which seem
To idler gaze in mercy given !
To find love, faith, and hope, a dream,
And turn to dark despair from heaven !*

I pass on to a wilder period of my history. The passion, as yet only revealed by the eye, was now to be recorded by the lip; and the scene which witnessed the first confession of the lovers was worthy of the last conclusion of their loves!

E—— was about twelve miles from a celebrated cliff on the seashore, and Lady Margaret had long proposed an excursion to a spot curious alike for its natural scenery and the legends attached to it. A day was at length fixed for accomplishing this plan. Falkland was of the party. In searching for something in the pockets of the carriage, his hand met Emily's, and involuntarily pressed it. She withdrew it hastily, but he felt it tremble. He did not dare to look up: that single contact had given him a new life; intoxicated with the most delicious sensations, he leaned back in silence. A fever had entered his veins, the thrill of the touch had gone like fire into his system, all his frame seemed one nerve.

Lady Margaret talked of the weather and the prospect, wondered how far they had got, and animadverted on the roads, till at last, like a child, she talked herself to rest. Mrs. Dalton read "Guy Mannering;" but neither Emily nor her lover had any occupation or thought in common with their companions: silent and absorbed, they were only alive to the vivid existence of the present. Constantly engaged, as we are, in looking behind us or before, if there be one hour in which we feel only the time being,—in which we feel sensibly that we live, and that those moments of the present are full of the enjoyment, the rapture of existence,—it is when we are with the *one* person whose life and spirits have become the great part and principle of our own. They

reached their destination,—a small inn close by the shore. They rested there a short time, and then strolled along the sands towards the cliff. Since Falkland had known Emily, her character was much altered. Six weeks before the time I write of, and in playfulness and lightness of spirits she was almost a child; now those indications of an unawakened heart had mellowed into a tenderness full of that melancholy so touching and holy, even amid the voluptuous softness which it breathes and inspires. But this day, whether from that coquetry so common to all women, or from some cause more natural to *her*, she seemed gayer than Falkland ever remembered to have seen her. She ran over the sands, picking up shells, and tempting the waves with her small and fairy feet, not daring to look at him, and yet speaking to him at times with a quick tone of levity which hurt and offended him, even though he knew the depth of those feelings she could not disguise either from him or from herself. By degrees his answers and remarks grew cold and sarcastic. Emily affected pique; and when it was discovered that the cliff was still nearly two miles off, she refused to proceed any farther. Lady Margaret talked her at last into consent, and they walked on as sullenly as an English party of pleasure possibly could do, till they were within three quarters of a mile of the place, when Emily declared she was so tired that she really could not go on. Falkland looked at her, perhaps, with no very amiable expression of countenance, when he perceived that she seemed really pale and fatigued; and when she caught his eyes, tears rushed into her own.

"Indeed, indeed, Mr. Falkland," said she, eagerly, "this is *not* affectation. I am very tired; but rather than prevent your amusement, I will endeavour to go on."

"Nonsense, child," said Lady Margaret, "you *do* seem tired. Mrs. Dalton and Falkland shall go to the rock, and I will stay here with you." This proposition, however, Lady Emily (who knew Lady Margaret's wish to see the rock) would not hear of; she insisted upon staying by herself. "Nobody will run away with me; and I can very easily amuse myself with picking up shells till you come back."

After a long remonstrance, which produced no effect, this plan was at last acceded to. With great reluctance Falkland set off with his two companions; but after the first step, he turned to look back. He caught her eye, and felt from that moment that their reconciliation was sealed. They arrived at last at the cliff. Its height, its excavations, the romantic interest which the traditions respecting it had inspired, fully repaid the two women for the fatigue of their walk. As for Falkland, he was unconscious of everything around him; he was full of "sweet and bitter thoughts." In vain the man whom they found loitering there, in order to serve as a guide, kept dinnin in his ear stories of the marvellous, and exclamations of the sublime. The first words which aroused him were these: "It's lucky, please your Honour, that you have just saved the tide. It is but last week that three poor people were drowned in attempting to come here; as it is, you will have to go home round the cliff." Falkland started: he felt his heart stand still. "Good God!" cried Lady Margaret, "what will become of Emily?"

They were at that instant in one of the caverns, where they had already been loitering too long. Falkland rushed out to the sands. The tide was hurrying in with a deep sound, which came on his soul like a knell. He looked back towards the way they had come: not one hundred yards distant, and the waters had already covered the path! An eternity would scarcely atone for the horror of that moment! One great characteristic of Falkland was his presence of mind. He turned to the man who stood beside him,—he gave him a cool and exact description of the spot where he had left Emily. He told him to repair with all possible speed to his home, to launch his boat, to row it to the place he had described. "Be quick," he added, "and you *must* be in time; if you are, you shall never know poverty again."

The next moment he was already several yards from the spot. He ran, or rather flew, till he was stopped by the waters. He rushed in; they were over a hollow between two rocks,—they were already up to his chest. "There is yet hope," thought he, when he had passed the spot, and saw the

smooth sand before him. For some minutes he was scarcely sensible of existence; and then he found himself breathless at *her* feet. Beyond, towards T—— (the small inn I spoke of), the waves had already reached the foot of the rocks, and precluded all hope of return. Their only chance was the possibility that the waters had not yet rendered impassable the hollow through which Falkland had just waded. He scarcely spoke; at least he was totally unconscious of what he said. He hurried her on breathless and trembling, with the sound of the booming waters ringing in his ear, and their billows advancing to his very feet. They arrived at the hollow: a single glance sufficed to show him that their solitary hope was past! The waters, before up to his chest, had swelled considerably; he could not swim. He saw in that instant that they were girt with a hastening and terrible death. Can it be believed that with that certainty ceased his fear? He looked in the pale but calm countenance of her who clung to him, and a strange tranquillity, even mingled with joy, possessed him. Her breath was on his cheek, her form was reclining on his own, his hand clasped hers; if they were to die, it was thus. What could life afford to him more dear?

"It is in this moment," said he, and he knelt as he spoke, "that I dare tell you what otherwise my lips never should have revealed. I love,—I adore you! Turn not away from me thus. In life our persons were severed; if our hearts are united in death, then death will be sweet." She turned,—*her cheek was no longer pale!* He rose,—he clasped her to his bosom; his lips pressed hers. Oh! that long, deep, burning pressure!—youth, love, life, soul,—all concentrated in that one kiss! Yet the same cause which occasioned the avowal hallowed also the madness of his heart. What had the passion, declared only at the approach of death, with the more earthly desires of life? They looked to heaven,—it was calm and unclouded; the evening lay there in its balm and perfume, and the air was less agitated than their sighs. They turned towards the beautiful sea which was to be their grave: the wild birds flew over it exultingly; the far vessels seemed "rejoicing to run their course." All was full of the

breath, the glory, the life of nature; and in how many minutes was all to be as *nothing*! Their existence would resemble the ships that have gone down at sea in the very smile of the element that destroyed them. They looked into each other's eyes, and they drew still nearer together. Their hearts, in safety apart, mingled in peril and became one. Minutes rolled on, and the great waves came dashing round them. They stood on the loftiest eminence they could reach. The spray broke over their feet: the billows rose—rose; they were speechless. He thought he heard her heart beat, but her lip trembled not. A speck! a boat! "Look up, Emily! look up! See how it cuts the waters. Nearer, nearer! but a little longer, and we are safe. It is but a few yards off! it approaches! it touches the rock!" Ah! what to them henceforth was the value of life, when the moment of discovering its charm became also the date of its misfortunes, and when the death they had escaped was the only method of cementing their union without consummating their guilt?

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON
FREDERICK MONKTON.

I will write to you at length to-morrow. Events have occurred to alter, perhaps, the whole complexion of the future. I am now going to Emily to propose to her to fly. We are not *les gens du monde*, who are ruined by the loss of public opinion. She has felt that I can be to her far more than the world; and as for me, what would I not forfeit for one touch of her hand?

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

Friday. — Since I wrote yesterday in these pages the narrative of our escape, I have done nothing but think over those moments, too dangerous because too dear; but at last I have steeled my heart. I have yielded to my own weakness too

long; I shudder at the abyss from which I have escaped. I can yet fly. He will come here to-day, — he shall receive my farewell.

Saturday morning, four o'clock. — I have sat in this room alone since eleven o'clock. I cannot give vent to my feelings; they seem as if crushed by some load from which it is impossible to rise. “*He is gone, and forever!*” I sit repeating those words to myself, scarcely conscious of their meaning. Alas! when to-morrow comes, and the next day, and the next, and yet I see him not, I shall awaken, indeed, to all the agony of my loss! He came here, he saw me alone, he implored me to fly. I did not dare to meet his eyes; I hardened my heart against his voice. I knew the part I was to take, — I have adopted it; but what struggles, what misery, has it not occasioned me! Who could have thought it had been so hard to be virtuous! His eloquence drove me from one defence to another, and then I had none but his mercy. I opened my heart; I showed him its weakness, I implored his forbearance. My tears, my anguish, convinced him of my sincerity. We have parted in bitterness, but, thank Heaven, not in guilt! He has entreated permission to write to me. How could I refuse him? Yet I may not — cannot — write to him again! How *could* I, indeed, suffer my heart to pour forth one of its feelings in reply, for would there be one word of regret, or one term of endearment, which my inmost soul would not echo?

Sunday. — Yes, *that day* — but I must not think of this; my very religion I dare not indulge. O God! how wretched I am! His visit was always the great era in the day; it employed all my hopes till he came, and all *my memory* when he was gone. I sit now and look at the place he used to fill, till I feel the tears rolling silently down my cheek; they come without an effort, they depart without relief.

Monday. — Henry asked me where Mr. Falkland was gone; I stooped down to hide my confusion. When shall I hear from him? To-morrow? Oh that it were come! I have placed the clock before me, and I actually count the minutes. He left a book here; it is a volume of “*Melmoth.*” I have

read over every word of it, and whenever I have come to a pencil-mark by him, I have paused to dream over that varying and eloquent countenance, the low soft tone of that tender voice, till the book has fallen from my hands, and I have started to find the utterness of my desolation !

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

— HOTEL, LONDON.

For the first time in my life I write to you ! How my hand trembles ! how my cheek flushes ! A thousand, thousand thoughts rush upon me, and almost suffocate me with the variety and confusion of the emotions they awaken ! I am agitated alike with the rapture of writing to you, and with the impossibility of expressing the feelings which I cannot distinctly unravel even to myself. You love me, Emily, and yet I have fled from you, and at your command ; but the thought that, though absent, I am not forgotten, supports me through all.

It was with a feverish sense of weariness and pain that I found myself entering this vast reservoir of human vices. I became at once sensible of the sterility of that polluted soil so incapable of nurturing affection, and I clasped your image the closer to my heart. It is you, who, when I was most weary of existence, gifted me with a new life. You breathed into me a part of your own spirit; my soul feels that influence, and becomes more sacred. I have shut myself from the idlers who would molest me; I have built a temple in my heart; I have set within it a divinity; and the vanities of the world shall not profane the spot which has been consecrated to *you*. Our parting, Emily—do you recall it? Your hand clasped in mine; your cheek resting, though but for an instant, on my bosom; and the tears which love called forth, but which virtue purified even at their source. Never were hearts so near, yet so divided; never was there an hour so tender, yet so unaccompanied with danger. Passion, grief, madness, all sank beneath your voice, and lay hushed like a deep sea within

my soul! "Tu abbia veduto il leone ammansarsi alla sola tua voce."¹

I tore myself from you; I hurried through the wood; I stood by the lake, on whose banks I had so often wandered with you. I bared my breast to the winds; I bathed my temples with the waters. Fool that I was! the fever, the fever was within! But it is not thus, my adored and beautiful friend, that I should console and support you. Even as I write, passion melts into tenderness, and pours itself in softness over your remembrance. The virtue so gentle, yet so strong; the feelings so kind, yet so holy; the tears which wept over the decision your lips proclaimed,—these are the recollections which come over me like dew. Let your own heart, my Emily, be your reward; and know that your lover only forgets that he *adores*, to remember that he *respects* you.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

—PARK.

I could not bear the tumult and noise of London. I sighed for solitude, that I might muse over your remembrance undisturbed. I came here yesterday. It is the home of my childhood. I am surrounded on all sides by the scenes and images consecrated by the fresh recollections of my unsullied years. *They* are not changed. The seasons which come and depart renew in them the havoc which they make. If the December destroys, the April revives; but man has but one spring, and the desolation of the heart but one winter! In this very room have I sat and brooded over dreams and hopes which— But no matter,—those dreams could never show me a vision to equal *you*, or those hopes hold out to me a blessing so precious as your love.

Do you remember, or rather can you ever forget, that moment in which the great depths of our souls were revealed? Ah! not in the scene in which such vows should have been whispered to your ear, and your tenderness have blushed its reply. The passion concealed in darkness was

¹ Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis.

revealed in danger; and the love which in life was forbidden was our comfort amidst the terrors of death! And that long and holy kiss, the first, the only moment in which our lips shared the union of our souls!—do not tell me that it is wrong to recall it! do not tell me that I sin, when I own to you the hours I sit alone, and nurse the delirium of that voluptuous remembrance. The feelings you have excited may render me wretched, but not guilty; for the love of *you* can only *hallow* the heart,—it is a fire which consecrates the altar on which it burns. I feel, even from the hour that I loved, that my soul has become more pure. I could not believe that *I* was capable of so unearthly an affection, or that the love of woman could possess that divinity of virtue which I worship in yours. The world is no fosterer of our young visions of purity and passion; embarked in its pursuits, and acquainted with its pleasures, while the latter sated me with what is evil, the former made me incredulous to what is pure. I considered your sex as a problem which my experience had already solved. Like the French philosophers, who lose truth by endeavouring to condense it, and who forfeit the *moral* from their regard to the *maxim*, I concentrated my knowledge of women into aphorisms and antitheses; and I did not dream of the exceptions, if I did not find myself deceived in the general conclusion. I confess that I erred; I renounce from this moment the colder reflections of my manhood,—the fruits of a bitter experience, the wisdom of an inquiring yet agitated life. I return with transport to my earliest visions of beauty and love; and I dedicate them upon the altar of my soul to *you*, who have embodied and concentrated and breathed them into life!

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

Monday. — This is the most joyless day in the whole week, for it can bring me no letter from him. I rise listlessly, and read over again and again the last letter I received from him. Useless task! it is graven on my heart! I long only for the

day to be over, because to-morrow I may, perhaps, hear from him again. When I wake at night from my disturbed and broken sleep, I look if the morning is near, — not because it gives light and life, but because it may bring tidings of him. When his letter is brought to me, I keep it for minutes unopened; I feed my eyes on the handwriting; I examine the seal; I press it with my kisses, before I indulge myself in the luxury of reading it. I then place it in my bosom, and take it thence only to read it again and again, — to moisten it with my tears of gratitude and love, and, alas! of penitence and remorse! What can be the end of this affection? I dare to hope neither that it may continue nor that it may cease; in either case I am wretched forever!

Monday night, twelve o'clock. — They observe my paleness, — the tears which tremble in my eyes, the listlessness and dejection of my manner. I think Mrs. Dalton guesses the cause. Humbled and debased in my own mind, I fly, Falkland, for refuge to you! Your affection cannot raise me to my former state, but it can reconcile — no — not reconcile, but support me in my present. This dear letter, I kiss it again — oh! that to-morrow were come!

Tuesday. — Another letter, so kind, so tender, so encouraging: would that I deserved his praises! alas! I sin even in reading them. I know that I ought to struggle more against my feelings. Once I attempted it; I prayed to Heaven to support me; I put away from me everything that could recall him to my mind, — for three days I would not open his letters. I could then resist no longer; and my weakness became the more confirmed from the feebleness of the struggle. I remember one day that he told us of a beautiful passage in one of the ancients, in which the bitterest curse against the wicked is that they may see virtue, but not be able to obtain it,¹ — that punishment is mine!

Wednesday. — My boy has been with me: I see him now from the windows gathering the field-flowers, and running after every butterfly which comes across him. Formerly he made all my delight and occupation; now he is even dearer

¹ Persius.

to me than ever, but he no longer engrosses all my thoughts. I turn over the leaves of this journal: once it noted down the little occurrences of the day; it marks nothing now but the monotony of sadness. *He* is not here, — *he* cannot come. What event then *could* I notice?

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.¹

— PARK.

If you knew how I long, how I thirst, for one word from you, — one word to say you are well, and have not forgotten me! — but I will not distress you. You will guess my feelings, and do justice to the restraint I impose on them, when I make no effort to alter your resolution not to write. I know that it is just, and I bow to my sentence; but can you blame me if I am restless and if I repine? It is past twelve; I always write to you at night. It is then, my own love, that my imagination can the more readily transport me to you; it is then that my spirit holds with you a more tender and undivided commune. In the day the world can force itself upon my thoughts, and its trifles usurp the place which “I love to keep for only thee and Heaven;” but in the night all things recall you the more vividly, — the stillness of the gentle skies, the blandness of the unbroken air, the stars, so holy in their loveliness, all speak and breathe to me of you. I think your hand is clasped in mine; and I again drink the low music of your voice, and imbibe again in the air the breath which has been perfumed by your lips. You seem to stand in my lonely chamber in the light and stillness of a spirit, who has wandered on earth to teach us the love which is felt in Heaven.

I cannot, believe me, — I cannot endure this separation long; it must be more or less. You must be mine forever, or our parting must be without a mitigation, which is rather a cruelty than a relief. If you will not accompany me, I will leave this country alone. I must not wean myself from your image by degrees, but break from the enchantment at once.

¹ Most of the letters from Falkland to Lady E. Mandeville I have thought it expedient to suppress.

And when, Emily, I am once more upon the world, when no tidings of my fate shall reach your ear, and all its power of alienation be left to the progress of time, — then, when you will at last have forgotten me, when your peace of mind will be restored, and, having no struggles of conscience to undergo, you will have no remorse to endure, — then, Emily, when we are indeed divided, let the scene which has witnessed our passion, the letters which have recorded my vow, the evil we have suffered, and the temptation we have overcome, let these in our old age be remembered, and in declaring to Heaven that we were innocent, add also — *that we loved.*

FROM DON ALPHONSO D'AGUILAR TO DON ____.

LONDON.

Our cause gains ground daily. The great, indeed the only ostensible, object of my mission is nearly fulfilled; but I have another charge and attraction which I am now about to explain to you. You know that my acquaintance with the English language and country arose from my sister's marriage with Mr. Falkland. After the birth of their only child I accompanied them to England; I remained with them for three years, and I still consider those days amongst the whitest in my restless and agitated career. I returned to Spain; I became engaged in the troubles and dissensions which distracted my unhappy country. Years rolled on, *how* I need not mention to *you*. One night they put a letter into my hands; it was from my sister; it was written on her deathbed. Her husband had died suddenly. She loved him as a Spanish woman loves, and she could not survive his loss. Her letter to me spoke of her country and her son. Amid the new ties she had formed in England, she had never forgotten the land of her fathers.

"I have already," she said, "taught my boy to remember that he has two countries; that the one, prosperous and free, may afford him his pleasures; that the other, struggling and debased, demands from him his duties. If, when he has attained the age in which you can judge of his character, he is respectable only from his rank, and valuable only from his wealth; if neither his head nor his heart will make him useful to *our* cause, suffer him to remain undisturbed in his prosperity

here; but if, as I presage, he becomes worthy of the blood which he bears in his veins, then I conjure you, my brother, to remind him that he has been sworn by me on my death-bed to the most sacred of earthly altars."

Some months since, when I arrived in England, before I ventured to find him out in person, I resolved to inquire into his character. Had he been as the young and the rich generally are, — had dissipation become habitual to him, and frivolity grown around him as a second nature, — then I should have acquiesced in the former injunction of my sister much more willingly than I shall now obey the latter. I find that he is perfectly acquainted with our language, that he has placed a large sum in our Funds, and that from the general liberality of his sentiments he is as likely to espouse, as (in that case) he would be certain, from his high reputation for talent, to serve, our cause. I am, therefore, upon the eve of seeking him out. I understand that he is living in perfect retirement in the county of —, in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr. Mandeville, an Englishman of considerable fortune, and warmly attached to our cause.

Mr. Mandeville has invited me to accompany him down to his estate for some days, and I am too anxious to see my nephew not to accept eagerly of the invitation. If I can persuade Falkland to aid us, it will be by the influence of his name, his talents, and his wealth. It is not of him that we can ask the stern and laborious devotion to which we have consecrated ourselves. The perfidy of friends, the vigilance of foes, the rashness of the bold, the cowardice of the wavering; strife in the closet, treachery in the senate, death in the field, — *these* constitute the fate we have pledged ourselves to bear. Little can any who do not endure it imagine of the life to which those who share the contests of an agitated and distracted country are doomed; but if they know not our griefs, neither can they dream of our consolation. We move like the delineation of Faith, over a barren and desert soil: the rock and the thorn and the stings of the adder are round our feet; but we clasp a crucifix to our hearts for our comfort, and we fix our eyes upon the heavens for our hope!

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

Wednesday. — His letters have taken a different tone: instead of soothing, they add to my distress; but I deserve all, — all that can be inflicted upon me. I have had a letter from Mr. Mandeville. He is coming down here for a few days, and intends bringing some friends with him. He mentions particularly a Spaniard, — *the uncle of Mr. Falkland, whom he asks if I have seen.* The Spaniard is particularly anxious to meet his nephew, — he does not then know that Falkland is gone. It will be some relief to see Mr. Mandeville alone; but even then how shall I meet him? What shall I say when he observes my paleness and alteration? I feel bowed to the very dust.

Thursday evening. — Mr. Mandeville has arrived; fortunately, it was late in the evening before he came, and the darkness prevented his observing my confusion and alteration. He was kinder than usual. Oh, how bitterly my heart avenged him! He brought with him the Spaniard, Don Alphonso d'Aguilar; I think there is a faint family likeness between him and Falkland. Mr. Mandeville brought also a letter from Julia. She will be here the day after to-morrow. The letter is short, but kind: she does not allude to *him*; it is some days since I heard from him.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON.
FREDERICK MONKTON.

I have resolved, Monkton, to go to her again! I am sure that it will be better for both of us to meet once more; perhaps, to unite forever! None who have once loved me can easily forget me. I do not say this from vanity, because I owe it not to my being *superior* to, but *different* from, others. I am sure that the remorse and affliction she feels now are far greater than she would experience, even were she more guilty, and with me. *Then*, at least, she would have some one to

soothe and sympathize in whatever she might endure. To one so pure as Emily, the full crime is already incurred. It is not the innocent who insist upon that nice line of morality between the thought and the action: such distinctions require reflection, experience, deliberation, prudence of head, or coldness of heart; these are the traits, not of the guileless, but of the worldly. It is the *affections*, not the *person*, of a virtuous woman, which it is difficult to obtain: that difficulty is the safeguard to her chastity; that difficulty I have, in this instance, overcome. I have endeavoured to live without Emily, but in vain. Every moment of absence only taught me the impossibility. In twenty-four hours I shall see her again. I feel my pulse rise into fever at the very thought.

Farewell, Monkton. My next letter, I hope, will record my triumph.

BOOK III.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF LADY EMILY. MANDEVILLE.

Friday. — Julia is here, and so kind! She has not mentioned *his* name, but she sighed so deeply when she saw my pale and sunken countenance that I threw myself into her arms and cried like a child. We had no need of other explanation: those tears spoke at once my confession and my repentance. No letter from him for several days! Surely he is not ill! how miserable that thought makes me!

Saturday. — A note has just been brought me from him. He is come back — *here!* Good heavens! how very imprudent! I am so agitated that I can write no more.

Sunday. — I have seen him! Let me repeat that sentence, — *I have seen him.* Oh that moment! did it not atone for all that I have suffered? I dare not write everything he said,

but he wakened me at five with him — how! what happiness, yet what pain in the very moment! still this foolish heart — would that it might break! I feel too well the sophistry of his arguments, and yet I cannot resist them. He seems to have thrown a spell over me, which precludes even the effort to escape.

Monday. — Mr. Mandeville has asked several people in the country to come here to-morrow, and there is to be a ball in the evening. Falkland is of course invited. We shall meet then, and live? I have been so little accustomed to disguise my feelings, that I dare tremble to meet him with so many witnesses around. Mr. Mandeville has been so harsh to me to-day; if Falkland ever looked at me so, or ever said one such word my heart would indeed break. What is it Alibi says about the two devils to whom he is forever a prey? "La chance e il tuo in perpetua lira." Alas! at times I start from my reveries with such a keen sense of agony and shame! How, how am I fallen!

Tuesday. — He is to come here to-day, and I shall see him!

Wednesday morning. — The night is over, thank Heaven! Falkland came late to dinner: every one else was assembled. How gracefully he entered! how superior he seemed to all the crowd that stood around him! He appeared as if he were resolved to exert powers which he had disdained before. He entered into the conversation, not only with such brilliancy, but with such a blandness and courtesy of manner! There was no scorn on his lip, no haughtiness on his forehead, — nothing which showed him for a moment conscious of his immeasurable superiority over every one present. After dinner, as we retired, I caught his eyes. What volumes they told! — and then I had to listen to his praises, *and say nothing*. I felt angry even in my pleasure. Who but I had a right to speak of him so well?

The ball came on; I felt languid and dispirited. Falkland did not dance. He sat himself by me; he urged me to — O God! O God! would that I were dead!

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

How are you this morning, my adored friend? You seemed pale and ill when we parted last night, and I shall be *so* unhappy till I hear something of you. O Emily, when you listened to me with those tearful and downcast looks; when I saw your bosom heave at every word which I whispered in your ear; when, as I accidentally touched your hand, I felt it tremble beneath my own, —oh! was there nothing in those moments at your heart which pleaded for me more eloquently than words? Pure and holy as you are, you know not, it is true, the feelings which burn and madden in me. When you are beside me, your hand, if it trembles, is not on fire; your voice, if it is more subdued, does not falter with the emotions it dares not express; your heart is not, like mine, devoured by a parching and wasting flame; your sleep is not turned by restless and turbulent dreams from the healthful renewal, into the very consumer, of life. No, Emily! God forbid that you *should* feel the guilt, the agony which preys upon me; but at least, in the fond and gentle tenderness of your heart, there must be a voice you find it difficult to silence. Amidst all the fictitious ties and fascinations of art, you cannot dismiss from your bosom the unconquerable impulses of nature. What is it you fear? —you will answer, *disgrace!* But can you feel it, Emily, when you share it with me? Believe me that the love which is nursed through shame and sorrow is of a deeper and holier nature than that which is reared in pride, and fostered in joy. But, if not shame, it is guilt, perhaps, which you dread? Are you then so innocent *now?* The adultery of the heart is no less a crime than that of the deed; and — yet I will not deceive you — it *is* guilt to which I tempt you! — *it is* a fall from the proud eminence you hold now. I grant this, and I offer you nothing in recompense but my love. If you loved like me, you would feel that it was something of pride, of triumph, to dare all things, even crime, for the one to whom all things are as nought! As for

me, I know that if a voice from Heaven told me to desert you, I would only clasp you the closer to my heart!

I tell you, my own love, that when your hand is in mine, when your head rests upon my bosom, when those soft and thrilling eyes shall be fixed upon my own, when every sigh shall be mingled with my breath, and every tear be kissed away at the very instant it rises from its source,—I tell you that then you shall only feel that every pang of the past, and every fear for the future, shall be but a new link to bind us the firmer to each other. Emily, my life, my love, you cannot, if you would, desert me. Who can separate the waters which are once united, or divide the hearts which have met and mingled into one?

Since they had once more met, it will be perceived that Falkland had adopted a new tone in expressing his passion to Emily. In the book of guilt another page, branded in a deeper and more burning character, had been turned. He lost no opportunity of summoning the earthlier emotions to the support of his cause. He wooed her fancy with the golden language of poetry, and strove to arouse the latent feelings of her sex by the soft magic of his voice, and the passionate meaning it conveyed. But at times there came over him a deep and keen sentiment of remorse; and even as his experienced and practised eye saw the moment of his triumph approach, he felt that the success he was hazarding his own soul and hers to obtain might bring him a momentary transport, but not a permanent happiness. There is always this difference in the love of women and of men: that in the former, when once admitted, it engrosses all the sources of thought, and excludes every object but itself; but in the latter, it is shared with all the former reflections and feelings which the past yet bequeaths us, and can neither (however powerful be its nature) constitute *the whole* of our happiness or woe. The love of man in his maturer years is not indeed so much a new emotion, as a revival and concentration of all his departed affections to others; and the deep and intense nature of Falkland's passion for Emily was linked with the recollections of

whatever he had formerly cherished as tender or dear; it touched, it awoke a long chain of young and enthusiastic feelings, which arose, perhaps, the fresher from their slumber. Who, when he turns to recall his first and fondest associations; when he throws off, one by one, the layers of earth and stone which have grown and hardened over the records of the past, — who has not been surprised to discover how fresh and unimpaired those buried treasures rise again upon his heart? They have been laid up in the storehouse of Time; they have not perished; their very concealment has preserved them! *We remove the lava, and the world of a gone day is before us!*

The evening of the day on which Falkland had written the above letter was rude and stormy. The various streams with which the country abounded were swelled by late rains into an unwonted rapidity and breadth; and their voices blended with the rushing sound of the winds, and the distant roll of the thunder, which began at last sullenly to subside. The whole of the scene around L—— was of that savage yet sublime character which suited well with the wrath of the aroused elements. Dark woods, large tracts of unenclosed heath, abrupt variations of hill and vale, and a dim and broken outline beyond of uninterrupted mountains, formed the great features of that romantic country.

It was filled with the recollections of his youth, and of the wild delight which he took then in the convulsions and varieties of nature, that Falkland roamed abroad that evening. The dim shadows of years, crowded with concealed events and corroding reflections, all gathered around his mind, and the gloom and tempest of the night came over him like the sympathy of a friend.

He passed a group of terrified peasants; they were cowering under a tree. The oldest hid his head and shuddered; but the youngest looked steadily at the lightning which played at fitful intervals over the mountain stream that rushed rapidly by their feet. Falkland stood beside them unnoticed and silent, with folded arms and a scornful lip. To him, nature, heaven, earth, had nothing for fear, and everything for reflec-

tion. In youth, thought he (as he contrasted the fear felt at one period of life with the indifference at another), there are so many objects to divide and distract life, that we are scarcely sensible of the collected conviction that we live. We lose the sense of what *is* by thinking rather of what is *to be*. But the old, who have no future to expect, are more vividly alive to the present, and they feel death more, because they have a more settled and perfect impression of existence.

He left the group, and went on alone by the margin of the winding and swelling stream. "It is [said a certain philosopher] in the conflicts of Nature that man most feels his littleness." Like all general maxims, this is only partially true. The mind, which takes its first ideas from perception, must take also its tone from the character of the objects perceived. In mingling our spirits with the great elements, we partake of their sublimity; we awaken thought from the secret depths where it had lain concealed; our feelings are too excited to remain riveted to ourselves; they blend with the mighty powers which are abroad; and as, in the agitations of men, the individual arouses from himself to become a part of the crowd, so in the convulsions of Nature we are equally awakened from the littleness of self, to be lost in the grandeur of the conflict by which we are surrounded.

Falkland still continued to track the stream: it wound its way through Mandeville's grounds, and broadened at last into the lake which was so consecrated to his recollections. He paused at that spot for some moments, looking carelessly over the wide expanse of waters, now dark as night, and now flashing into one mighty plain of fire beneath the coruscations of the lightning. The clouds swept on in massy columns, dark and aspiring, veiling, while they rolled up to, the great heavens, like the shadows of human doubt. Oh! weak, weak was that dogma of the philosopher! There is a *pride* in the storm which, according to his doctrine, would debase us; a stirring music in its roar; even a savage joy in its destruction: for we can exult in a defiance of its power, even while we share in its triumphs, in a consciousness of a superior spirit within us to that which is around. We can mock at

the fury of the elements, for they are less terrible than the passions of the heart; at the devastations of the awful skies, for they are less desolating than the wrath of man; at the convulsions of that surrounding nature which has no peril, no terror to the soul, which is more indestructible and eternal than itself. Falkland turned towards the house which contained *his* world; and as the lightning revealed at intervals the white columns of the porch, and wrapped in sheets of fire, like a spectral throng, the tall and waving trees by which it was encircled, and then as suddenly ceased, and "the jaws of darkness" devoured up the scene, he compared, with that bitter alchemy of feeling which resolves all into one crucible of thought, those alternations of sight and shadow to the history of his own guilty love,—that passion whose birth was the womb of Night; shrouded in darkness, surrounded by storms, and receiving only from the angry heavens a momentary brilliance, more terrible than its customary gloom.

As he entered the saloon, Lady Margaret advanced towards him. "My dear Falkland," said she, "how good it is in you to come in such a night. We have been watching the skies till Emily grew terrified at the lightning; *formerly* it did not alarm her." And Lady Margaret turned, utterly unconscious of the reproach she had conveyed, towards Emily.

Did not Falkland's look turn also to that spot? Lady Emily was sitting by the harp which Mrs. St. John appeared to be most seriously employed in tuning; her countenance was bent downwards, and burning beneath the blushes called forth by the gaze which she *felt* was upon her.

There was in Falkland's character a peculiar dislike to all outward display of less worldly emotions. He had none of the vanity most men have in conquest; he would not have had any human being know that he was loved. He was right! No altar should be so unseen and inviolable as the human heart! He saw at once and relieved the embarrassment he had caused. With the remarkable fascination and grace of manner so peculiarly his own, he made his excuses to Lady Margaret for his disordered dress; he charmed his uncle, Don Alphonso, with a quotation from Lopez de Vega; he inquired tenderly

of Mrs. Dalton touching the health of her Italian grayhound; and then — nor till then — he ventured to approach Emily, and speak to her in that soft tone, which, like a fairy language, is understood only by the person it addresses. Mrs. St. John rose and left the harp; Falkland took her seat. He bent down to whisper Emily. His long hair touched her cheek! it was still wet with the night dew. She looked up as she felt it, and met his gaze: better had it been to have lost earth than to have drunk the soul's poison from that eye when it tempted to sin!

Mrs. St. John stood at some distance; Don Alphonso was speaking to her of his nephew, and of his hopes of ultimately gaining him to the cause of his mother's country. "See you not," said Mrs. St. John, and her colour went and came, "that while he has such attractions to detain him, your hopes are in vain?"

"What mean you?" replied the Spaniard; but his eye had followed the direction she had given it, and the question came only from his lips. Mrs. St. John drew him to a still remoter corner of the room, and it was in the conversation that then ensued between them, that they agreed to unite for the purpose of separating Emily from her lover, — "I to save my friend," said Mrs. St. John, "and you your kinsman." Thus is it with human virtue, — the fair show and the good deed without, the one eternal motive of selfishness within. During the Spaniard's visit at E——, he had seen enough of Falkland to perceive the great consequence he might, from his perfect knowledge of the Spanish language, from his singular powers, and, above all, from his command of wealth, be to the cause of that party he himself had adopted. His aim, therefore, was now no longer confined to procuring Falkland's good-will and aid at home — he hoped to secure his personal assistance in Spain; and he willingly coincided with Mrs. St. John in detaching his nephew from a tie so likely to detain him from that service to which Alphonso wished he should be pledged.

Mandeville had left E—— that morning: he suspected nothing of Emily's attachment. This, on his part, was less

confidence than indifference. He was one of those persons who have no existence separate from their own: his senses all turned inwards; they reproduced selfishness. Even the House of Commons was only an object of interest, because he imagined it *a part of him, not he of it*. He said, with the insect on the wheel, "Admire *our* rapidity." But did the defects of his character remove Lady Emily's guilt? No! and this, at times, was her bitterest conviction. Whoever turns to these pages for an apology for sin will be mistaken. They contain the burning records of its sufferings, its repentance, and its doom. If there be one crime in the history of woman worse than another, it is adultery. It is, in fact, the only crime to which, in ordinary life, she is exposed. Man has a thousand temptations to sin,—woman has but one; if she cannot resist it, she has no claim upon our mercy. The heavens are just! her own guilt is her punishment! Should these pages, at this moment, meet the eyes of one who has become the centre of a circle of disgrace,—the contaminator of her house, the dishonour of her children,—no matter what the excuse for her crime, no matter what the exchange of her station—in the very arms of her lover, in the very cincture of the new ties which she has chosen,—I call upon her to answer me if the fondest moments of rapture are free from humiliation, though they have forgotten remorse; and if the passion itself of her lover has not become no less the penalty than the recompense of her guilt. But at that hour of which I now write, there was neither in Emily's heart, nor in that of her seducer, any recollection of their sin. Those hearts were too full for thought,—they had forgotten everything but each other. Their love was their creation: beyond, all was night, chaos, nothing!

Lady Margaret approached them. "You will sing to us, Emily, to-night? It is *so* long since we have heard you!" It was in vain that Emily tried,—her voice failed. She looked at Falkland, and could scarcely restrain her tears. She had not yet learned the latest art which sin teaches us,—*its concealment!* "I will supply Lady Emily's place," said Falkland. *His* voice was calm, and *his* brow serene: the

world had left nothing for him to learn. "Will you play the air," he said to Mrs. St. John, "that you gave us some nights ago? I will furnish the words." Mrs. St. John's hand trembled as she obeyed.

SONG.

I.

Ah, let us love while yet we may,
Our summer is decaying ;
And woe to hearts which, in their gray
December, go a maying.

II.

Ah, let us love, while of the fire
Time hath not yet bereft us :
With years our warmer thoughts expire,
Till only ice is left us !

III.

We 'll fly the bleak world's bitter air,
A brighter home shall win us ;
And if our hearts grow weary there,
We 'll find a world within us.

IV.

They preach that passion fades each hour,
That nought will pall like pleasure ;
My bee, if Love 's so frail a flower,
Oh, haste to hive its treasure.

V.

Wait not the hour, when all the mind
Shall to the crowd be given ;
For links, which to the million bind,
Shall from the one be riven.

VI.

But let us love while yet we may,
Our summer is decaying ;
And woe to hearts which, in their gray
December, go a maying.

The next day Emily rose ill and feverish. In the absence of Falkland, her mind always awoke to the full sense of the guilt she had incurred. She had been brought up in the

strictest, even the most fastidious, principles; and her nature was so pure, that merely to err appeared like a change in existence,—like an entrance into some new and unknown world, from which she shrank back, in terror, to herself.

Judge, then, if she easily habituated her mind to its present degradation. She sat, that morning, pale and listless; her book lay unopened before her; her eyes were fixed upon the ground, heavy with suppressed tears. Mrs. St. John entered; no one else was in the room. She sat by her, and took her hand. Her countenance was scarcely less colourless than Emily's, but its expression was more calm and composed.

"It is not too late, Emily," she said; "you have done much that you should repent,—nothing to render repentance unavailing. Forgive me, if I speak to you on this subject. It is time: in a few days your fate will be decided. I have looked on, though hitherto I have been silent: I have witnessed that eye when it dwelt upon you; I have heard that voice when it spoke to your heart. None ever resisted their influence long; do you imagine that you are the first who have found the power? Pardon me, pardon me, I beseech you, my dearest friend, if I pain you. I have known you from your childhood, and I only wish to preserve you spotless to your old age."

Emily wept, without replying. Mrs. St. John continued to argue and expostulate. What is so wavering as passion? When, at last, Mrs. St. John ceased, and Emily shed upon her bosom the hot tears of her anguish and repentance, she imagined that her resolution was taken, and that she could almost have vowed an eternal separation from her lover; Falkland came that evening, and she loved him more madly than before.

Mrs. St. John was not in the saloon when Falkland entered. Lady Margaret was reading the well-known story of Lady T— and the Duchess of M—, in which an agreement had been made and *kept*, that the one who died first should return once more to the survivor. As Lady Margaret spoke laughingly of the anecdote, Emily, who was watching Falkland's countenance, was struck with the dark and sudden shade

which fell over it. He moved in silence towards the window where Emily was sitting. "Do you believe," she said, with a faint smile, "in the possibility of such an event?"

"I believe — though I reject — nothing!" replied Falkland, "but I would give worlds for such a proof that death does not destroy."

"Surely," said Emily, "you do not deny that evidence of our immortality which we gather from the Scriptures? — are they not all that a voice from the dead could be?"

Falkland was silent for a few moments: he did not seem to hear the question; his eyes dwelt upon vacancy; and when he at last spoke, it was rather in commune with himself than in answer to her.

"I have watched," said he, in a low internal tone, "over the tomb; I have called, in the agony of my heart, unto her who slept beneath; I would have *dissolved my very soul* into a spell, could it have summoned before me for one, one moment the being who had once been the spirit of my life! I have been, as it were, *entranced* with the intensity of my own adjuration; I have gazed upon the empty air, and worked upon my mind to fill it with imaginings; I have called aloud unto the winds, and tasked my soul to waken their silence to reply. All was a waste, a stillness, an infinity, — without a wanderer or a voice! The dead answered me not, when I invoked them; and in the vigils of the still night I looked from the rank grass and the mouldering stones to the Eternal Heavens, as man looks from decay to immortality! Oh! that awful magnificence of repose, that living sleep, that breathing yet unrevealing divinity, spread over those still worlds! To *them* also I poured my thoughts — *but in a whisper*. I did not dare to breathe *aloud* the unhallowed anguish of my mind to the majesty of the unsympathizing stars! In the vast order of creation — in the midst of the stupendous system of universal life, my doubt and inquiry were murmured forth — *a voice crying in the wilderness, and returning without an echo, unanswered unto myself!*"

The deep light of the summer moon shone over Falkland's countenance, which Emily gazed on, as she listened, almost

tremblingly, to his words. His brow was knit and hueless, and the large drops gathered slowly over it, as if wrung from the strained yet impotent tension of the thoughts within. Emily drew nearer to him,—she laid her hand upon his own.

“Listen to me,” she said; “if a herald from the grave could satisfy your doubt, *I would gladly die that I might return to you!*”

“Beware,” said Falkland, with an agitated but solemn voice; “the words now so lightly spoken may be registered on high.”

“*Be it so!*” replied Emily firmly, and she felt what she said. Her love penetrated beyond the tomb, and she would have forfeited all here for their union hereafter.

“In my earliest youth,” said Falkland, more calmly than he had yet spoken, “I found in the present and the past of this world enough to direct my attention to the futurity of another: if I did not credit all with the enthusiast, I had no sympathies with the scorner; I sat myself down to examine and reflect; I pored alike over the pages of the philosopher and the theologian; I was neither baffled by the subtleties nor deterred by the contradictions of either. As men first ascertained the geography of the earth by observing the signs of the heavens, I did homage to the Unknown God, and sought from that worship to inquire into the reasonings of mankind. I did not confine myself to books,—all things breathing or inanimate constituted my study. From death itself I endeavoured to extract its secret; and whole nights I have sat in the crowded asylums of the dying, watching the last spark flutter and decay. Men die away as in sleep, without effort or struggle or emotion. I have looked on their countenances a moment before death, and the serenity of repose was upon them, waxing only more deep as it approached that slumber which is never broken: the breath grew gentler and gentler, till the lips it came from fell from each other, and all was hushed; the light had departed from the cloud, but the cloud itself, gray, cold, altered as it seemed, was as before. They died and made no sign. They had left the labyrinth without bequeathing us its clew. It is in vain that I have sent my spirit into the land of shadows,—it has borne back no wit-

nesses of its inquiry. As Newton said of himself, 'I picked up a few shells by the seashore, but the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me.'"

There was a long pause. Lady Margaret had sat down to chess with the Spaniard. No look was upon the lovers; their eyes met, and with that one glance the whole current of their thoughts was changed. The blood, which a moment before had left Falkland's cheek so colourless, rushed back to it again. The love which had so penetrated and pervaded his whole system, and which abstruser and colder reflection had just calmed, thrilled through his frame with redoubled power. As if by an involuntary and mutual impulse, their lips met: he threw his arm round her; he strained her to his bosom.

"Dark as my thoughts are," he whispered, "evil as has been my life, will you not yet soothe the one, and guide the other? My Emily! my love! the *Heaven to the tumultuous ocean of my heart!* will you not be mine, mine only—wholly—and forever?" She did not answer, she did not turn from his embrace. Her cheek flushed as his breath stole over it, and her bosom heaved beneath the arm which encircled that empire so devoted to him.

"Speak one word, only one word," he continued to whisper: "will you not be mine? Are you not mine at heart even at this moment?"

Her head sank upon his bosom. Those deep and eloquent eyes looked up to his through their dark lashes. "I *will* be yours," she murmured: "I am at your mercy; I have no longer any existence but in you. My only fear is, that I shall cease to be worthy of your love!"

Falkland pressed his lips once more to her own: it was his only answer, and the last seal to their compact. As they stood before the open lattice, the still and unconscious moon looked down upon that record of guilt. There was not a cloud in the heavens to dim *her* purity; the very winds of night had hushed themselves to do her homage; all was silent but *their* hearts. They stood beneath the calm and holy skies, a guilty and devoted pair,—a fearful contrast of the sin and turbulence of this unquiet earth to the passionless serenity of the

eternal heaven. The same stars, that for thousands of unfathomed years had looked upon the changes of this nether world, gleamed pale and pure and steadfast upon their burning but transitory vow. In a few years what of the condemnation or the recorders of that vow would remain? From other lips, on that spot, other oaths might be plighted; new pledges of unchangeable fidelity exchanged: and year after year, in each succession of scene and time, the same stars will look from the mystery of their untracked and impenetrable home, to mock, as now, with their immutability, the variations and shadows of mankind!

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

At length, then, you are to be mine,—you have consented to fly with me. In three days we shall leave this country, and have no home, no world, but in each other. We will go, my Emily, to those golden lands where Nature, the only companion we will suffer, woos us, like a mother, to find our asylum in her breast; where the breezes are languid beneath the passion of the voluptuous skies; and where the purple light that invests all things with its glory is only less tender and consecrating than the spirit which we bring. Is there not, my Emily, in the external nature which reigns over creation, and that human nature centred in ourselves, some secret and undefinable intelligence and attraction? Are not the impressions of the former as spells over the passions of the latter; and in gazing upon the loveliness around us, do we not gather, as it were, and store within our hearts, an increase of the yearning and desire of love? What can we demand from earth but its solitudes,—what from heaven but its unpolluted air? All that others would ask from either, we can find in ourselves. Wealth, honour, happiness, every object of ambition or desire, exist not for us without the circle of our arms! But the bower that surrounds us shall not be unworthy of your beauty or our love. Amidst the myrtle and the vine, and the valleys where the summer sleeps, and the

rivers that murmur the memories and the legends of old ; amidst the hills and the glossy glades, and the silver fountains, still as beautiful as if the Nymph and Spirit yet held and decorated an earthly home,—amidst these we will make the couch of our bridals, and the moon of Italian skies shall keep watch on our repose.

Emily! Emily! — how I love to repeat and to linger over that beautiful name! If to see, to address, and, more than all, to touch you, has been a rapture, what word can I find in the vocabulary of happiness to express the realization of that hope which now burns within me,—to mingle our youth together into one stream, wheresoever it flows; to respire the same breath; to be almost blent in the same existence; to grow, as it were, on one stem, and knit into a *single* life the feelings, the wishes, the *being* of both!

To-night I shall see you again: let one day more intervene and—I cannot conclude the sentence! As I have written, the tumultuous happiness of hope has come over me to confuse and overwhelm everything else. At this moment my pulse riots with fever; the room swims before my eyes; everything is indistinct and jarring,—a chaos of emotions. Oh, that happiness should ever have such excess!

When Emily received and laid this letter to her heart, she felt nothing in common with the spirit which it breathed. With that quick transition and inconstancy of feeling common in women, and which is as frequently their safety as their peril, her mind had already repented of the weakness of the last evening, and relapsed into the irresolution and bitterness of her former remorse. Never had there been in the human breast a stronger contest between conscience and passion,—if, indeed, the extreme softness (notwithstanding its power) of Emily's attachment could be called passion: it was rather a love that had refined by the increase of its own strength; it contained nothing but the primary guilt of conceiving it, which that order of angels, *whose nature is love*, would have sought to purify away. To see him, to live with him, to count the variations of his countenance and voice, to

touch his hand at moments when waking, and watch over his slumbers when he slept,— this was the essence of her wishes, and constituted the limit to her desires. Against the temptations of the present was opposed the whole history of the past. Her mind wandered from each to each, wavering and wretched, as the impulse of the moment impelled it. Hers was not, indeed, a strong character; her education and habits had weakened, while they rendered more feminine and delicate, a nature originally too soft. Every recollection of former purity called to her with the loud voice of duty, as a warning from the great guilt she was about to incur; and whenever she thought of her child,— that centre of fond and sinless sensations, where once she had so wholly garnered up her heart,— her feelings melted at once from the object which had so wildly held them riveted as by a spell, to dissolve and lose themselves in the great and sacred fountain of a mother's love.

When Falkland came that evening, she was sitting at a corner of the saloon, apparently occupied in reading; but her eyes were fixed upon her boy, whom Mrs. St. John was endeavouring at the opposite end of the room to amuse. The child, who was fond of Falkland, came up to him as he entered: Falkland stooped to kiss him; and Mrs. St. John said, in a low voice which just reached his ear, "Judas, too, kissed before he betrayed." Falkland's colour changed: he felt the sting the words were intended to convey. On that child, now so innocently caressing him, he was indeed about to inflict a disgrace and injury the most sensible and irremediable in his power. But who ever indulges reflection in passion? He banished the remorse from his mind as instantaneously as it arose; and, seating himself by Emily, endeavoured to inspire her with a portion of the joy and hope which animated himself. Mrs. St. John watched them with a jealous and anxious eye: she had already seen how useless had been her former attempt to arm Emily's conscience effectually against her lover; but she resolved at least to renew the impression she had then made. The danger was imminent, and any remedy must be prompt; and it was something to protract, even if

she could not finally break off, a union against which were arrayed all the angry feelings of jealousy, as well as the better affections of the friend. Emily's eye was already brightening beneath the words that Falkland whispered in her ear, when Mrs. St. John approached her. She placed herself on a chair beside them, and unmindful of Falkland's bent and angry brow, attempted to create a general and commonplace conversation. Lady Margaret had invited two or three people in the neighbourhood; and when these came in, music and cards were resorted to immediately, with that English *politesse*, which takes the earliest opportunity to show that the conversation of our friends is the last thing for which we have invited them. But Mrs. St. John never left the lovers; and at last, when Falkland, in despair at her obstinacy, arose to join the card-table, she said, "Pray, Mr. Falkland, were you not intimate at one time with —, who eloped with Lady —?"

"I knew him but slightly," said Falkland; and then added, with a sneer, "the only times I ever met him were at your house."

Mrs. St. John, without noticing the sarcasm, continued: "What an unfortunate affair that proved! They were very much attached to one another in early life,—the *only* excuse, perhaps, for a woman's breaking her subsequent vows. They eloped. The remainder of their history is briefly told: it is that of all who forfeit everything for passion, and forget that of everything it is the briefest in duration. He who had sacrificed his honour for her, sacrificed her also as lightly for another. She could not bear his infidelity; and how could she reproach him? In the very act of yielding to, she had become unworthy of, his love. She *did not* reproach him,—she died of a broken heart. I saw her just before her death, for I was distantly related to her, and I could not forsake her utterly even in her sin. She then spoke to me only of the child by her former marriage, whom she had left in the years when it most needed her care: she questioned me of its health, its education, its very growth: the minutest thing was not beneath her inquiry. His tidings were all that

brought back to her mind ‘the redolence of joy and spring.’ I brought that child to her one day: *he* at least had never forgotten her. How bitterly both wept when they were separated! and she— poor, poor Ellen,— an hour after their separation was no more!” There was a pause for a few minutes. Emily was deeply affected. Mrs. St. John had anticipated the effect she had produced, and concerted the method to increase it. “It is singular,” she resumed, “that, the evening before her elopement, some verses were sent to her anonymously,— I do not think, Emily, that you have ever seen them. Shall I sing them to you now?” and, without waiting for a reply, she placed herself at the piano; and with a low but sweet voice, greatly aided in effect by the extreme feeling of her manner, she sang the following verses:—

TO ——.

I.

And wilt thou leave that happy home,
Where once it was so sweet to live ?
Ah, think, before thou seek’st to roam,
What safer shelter Guilt can give !

II.

The Bird may rove, and still regain
With spotless wings, her wonted rest ;
But home, once lost, is ne’er again
Restored to Woman’s erring breast !

III.

If wandering o’er a world of flowers,
The heart at times would ask repose ;
But thou wouldest lose the only bower
Of rest amid a world of woes.

IV.

Recall thy youth’s unsullied vow,
The past which on thee smiled so fair;
Then turn from thence to picture now
The frowns thy future fate must wear !

V.

No hour, no hope, can bring relief
 To her who hides a blighted name ;
 For hearts unbowed by stormiest grief
 Will break beneath one breeze of shame !

VI.

And when thy child's deserted years
 Amid life's early woes are thrown,
 Shall menial bosoms soothe the tears
 That should be shed on thine alone ?

VII.

When on thy name his lips shall call,
 (That tender name, the earliest taught !)
 Thou wouldest not Shame and Sin were all
 The memories linked around its thought !

VIII.

If Sickness haunt his infant bed,
 Ah ! what could then replace thy care ?
 Could hireling steps as gently tread
 As if a Mother's soul was there ?

IX.

Enough ! 't is not too late to shun
 The bitter draught thyself wouldest fill ;
 The latest link is not undone,
 Thy bark is in the haven still.

X.

If doomed to grief through life thou art,
 'T is thine at least unstained to die !
 Oh, better break at once thy heart
 Than rend it from its holiest tie !

It were vain to attempt to describe Emily's feelings when the song ceased. The scene floated before her eyes indistinct and dark. The violence of the emotions she attempted to conceal pressed upon her almost to choking. She rose, looked at Falkland with one look of such anguish and despair that it froze his very heart, and left the room without uttering a word. A moment more, they heard a noise,—a fall. They rushed out; Emily was stretched on the ground, apparently lifeless. *She had broken a blood vessel!*

BOOK IV.

FROM MRS. ST. JOHN TO ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ.

At last I can give a more favourable answer to your letters. Emily is now *quite* out of danger. Since the day you forced yourself, with such a disinterested regard for her health and reputation, into her room, she grew (no thanks to your forbearance) gradually better. I trust that she will be able to see you in a few days. I hope this the more, because she now feels and decides that it will be for the last time. You have, it is true, injured her happiness for life: her virtue, thank Heaven, is yet spared; and though you have made her wretched, you will never, I trust, succeed in making her despised.

You ask me, with some menacing and more complaint, why I am so bitter against you. I will tell you. I not only know Emily, and feel confident, from that knowledge, that nothing can recompense her for the reproaches of conscience, but I know *you*, and am convinced that you are the last man to render her happy. I set aside, for the moment, all rules of religion and morality in general, and speak to you (to use the cant and abused phrase) "without prejudice" as to the particular instance. Emily's nature is soft and susceptible, yours fickle and wayward in the extreme. The smallest change or caprice in you, which would not be noticed by a mind less delicate, would wound *her* to the heart. You know that the very softness of her character arises from its want of strength. Consider, for a moment, if she could bear the humiliation and disgrace which visit so heavily the offences of an English wife. She has been brought up in the strictest notions of morality; and, in a mind not naturally strong,

nothing can efface the first impressions of education. She is not — indeed she is not — fit for a life of sorrow or degradation. In another character, another line of conduct might be desirable; but with regard to *her*, pause, Falkland, I beseech you, before you attempt again to destroy her forever. I have said all. Farewell.

Your, and above all, Emily's friend.

**FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.**

You will see me, Emily, now that you are recovered sufficiently to do so without danger. I do not ask this as a favour. If my love has deserved anything from yours, if past recollections give me any claim over you, if my nature has not forfeited the spell which it formerly possessed upon your own, I demand it as a right.

The bearer waits for your answer.

**FROM LADY EMILY MANDEVILLE TO ERASMUS
FALKLAND, ESQ.**

See you, Falkland! Can you doubt it? Can you think for a moment that your commands can ever cease to become a law to me? Come here whenever you please. If, during my illness, they have prevented it, it was without my knowledge. I await you; but I own that this interview will be the last, if I can claim anything from your mercy.

**FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.**

I have seen you, Emily, and for the last time! My eyes are dry,—my hand does not tremble. I live, move, breathe, as before — and yet I have seen you for the last time! You told me — even while you leaned on my bosom, even while your lip pressed mine,—you told me (and I saw your sin-

cerity) to spare you, and to see you no more. You told me you had no longer any will, any fate of your own; that you would, if I still continued to desire it, leave friends, home, honour, for me; but you did not disguise from me that you would in so doing leave happiness also. You did not conceal from me that I was not sufficient to constitute all your world; you threw yourself, as you had done once before, upon what you called my generosity; you did not deceive yourself then,—you have not deceived yourself now. In two weeks I shall leave England, probably forever. I have another country still more dear to me, from its afflictions and humiliation. Public ties differ but little in their nature from private; and this confession of preference of what is debased to what is exalted will be an answer to Mrs. St. John's assertion that we cannot love in disgrace as we can in honour. Enough of this. In the choice, my poor Emily, that you have made, I cannot reproach you. You have done wisely, rightly, virtuously. You said that this separation must rest rather with me than with yourself; that you would be mine the moment I demanded it. I will not now or ever accept this promise. No one, much less one whom I love so intensely, so truly as I do you, shall ever receive disgrace at my hands, unless she can feel that that disgrace would be dearer to her than glory elsewhere; that the simple fate of being mine was not so much a recompense as a reward; and that, in spite of worldly depreciation and shame, it would constitute and concentrate all her visions of happiness and pride. I am now going to bid you farewell. May you—I say this disinterestedly, and from my very heart—may you soon forget how much you have loved and yet love me! For this purpose, you cannot have a better companion than Mrs. St. John. Her opinion of me is loudly expressed, and probably true; at all events, you will do wisely to believe it. You will hear me attacked and reproached by many. I do not deny the charges; you know best what I have deserved from *you*. God bless you, Emily. Wherever I go, I shall never cease to love you as I do now. May you be happy in your child and in your conscience! Once more, God bless you, and farewell!

FROM LADY EMILY MANDEVILLE TO ERASMUS
FALKLAND, ESQ.

O Falkland! you have conquered! I am yours—*yours only*—*wholly and forever*. When your letter came, my hand trembled so, that I could not open it for several minutes; and when I did, I felt as if the very earth had passed from my feet. You were going from your country; you were about to be lost to me forever. I could restrain myself no longer; all my virtue, my pride, forsook me at once. Yes, yes, you are indeed my world! I will fly with you anywhere—everywhere. Nothing can be dreadful but not seeing you; I would be a servant, a slave, a dog, as long as I could be with you,—hear one tone of your voice, catch one glance of your eye. I scarcely see the paper before me, my thoughts are so straggling and confused. Write to me one word, Falkland; one word, and I will lay it to my heart, and be happy.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND TO LADY EMILY
MANDEVILLE.

— HOTEL, LONDON.

I hasten to you, Emily, my own and only love. Your letter has restored me to life. To-morrow we shall meet.

It was with mingled feelings, alloyed and embittered, in spite of the burning hope which predominated over all, that Falkland returned to E——. He knew that he was near the completion of his most ardent wishes; that he was within the grasp of a prize which included all the thousand objects of ambition, into which, among other men, the desires are divided; the only dreams he had ventured to form for years were about to kindle into life. He had every reason to be happy;—such is the inconsistency of human nature, that he was almost wretched. The morbid melancholy habitual to him threw its colourings over every emotion and idea. He knew the character of the woman whose affections he had seduced, and he trembled to think of the doom to which he was

about to condemn her. With this, there came over his mind a long train of dark and remorseful recollections. Emily was not the only one whose destruction he had prepared. All who had loved him he had repaid with ruin; and *one*, the first, the fairest, and the most loved, with death.

That last remembrance more bitterly than all possessed him. It will be recollected that Falkland, in the letters which begin this work, speaking of the ties he had formed after the loss of his first love, says that it was the senses, not the affections, that were engaged. Never, indeed, since her death, till he met Emily, had his *heart* been unfaithful to her memory. Alas! none but those who have cherished in their souls an image of the death; who have watched over it for long and bitter years in secrecy and gloom; who have felt that it was to them as a holy and fairy spot which no eye but theirs could profane; who have filled all things with *recollections* as with a spell, and made the universe one wide mausoleum of the lost,—none but those can understand the mysteries of that regret which is shed over every after passion, though it be more burning and intense; that sense of sacrilege with which we fill up the haunted recesses of the spirit with a new and a living idol, and perpetrate the last act of infidelity to that buried love, which the heavens that now receive her, the earth where we beheld her, tell us, with the unnumbered voices of Nature, to worship with the incense of our faith.

His carriage stopped at the lodge. The woman who opened the gates gave him the following note:—

Mr. Mandeville is returned; I almost fear that he suspects our attachment. Julia says that if you come again to E——, she will inform him. I dare not, dearest Falkland, see you here. What is to be done? I am very ill and feverish; my brain burns so, that I can think, feel, remember nothing, but the one thought, feeling, and remembrance, — that through shame, and despite of guilt, in life and till death, I am

Yours,

E. M.

As Falkland read this note, his extreme and engrossing love for Emily doubled with each word: an instant before, and the

certainty of seeing her had suffered his mind to be divided into a thousand objects; now doubt united them once more into one.

He altered his route to L——, and despatched from thence a short note to Emily, imploring her to meet him that evening by the lake in order to arrange their ultimate flight. Her answer was brief and blotted with her tears; but it was assent.

During the whole of that day, at least from the moment she received Falkland's letter, Emily was scarcely sensible of a single idea; she sat still and motionless, gazing on vacancy, and seeing nothing within her mind or in the objects which surrounded her but one dreary blank. Sense, thought, feeling, even remorse, were congealed and frozen; and the tides of emotion were still, *but they were ice!*

As Falkland's servant had waited without to deliver the note to Emily, Mrs. St. John had observed him; her alarm and surprise only served to quicken her presence of mind. She intercepted Emily's answer under pretence of giving it herself to Falkland's servant. She read it, and her resolution was formed. After carefully resealing and delivering it to the servant, she went at once to Mr. Mandeville, and revealed Lady Emily's attachment to Falkland. In this act of treachery, she was solely instigated by her passions; and when Mandeville, roused from his wonted apathy to a paroxysm of indignation, thanked her again and again for the generosity of friendship which he imagined was all that actuated her communication, he dreamed not of the fierce and ungovernable jealousy which envied the very disgrace which her confession was intended to award. Well said the French enthusiast, "that the heart, the most serene to appearance, resembles that calm and glassy fountain which cherishes the monster of the Nile in the bosom of its waters." Whatever reward Mrs. St. John proposed to herself in this action, verily she has had the recompense that was her due. Those consequences of her treachery, which I hasten to relate, have ceased to others,—to *her* they remain. Amidst the pleasures of dissipation, one reflection has rankled at her mind; one

dark cloud has rested between the sunshine and her soul; like the murderer in Shakspeare, the revel where she fled for forgetfulness has teemed to her with the spectres of remembrance. O thou untameable conscience! thou that never flatterest, thou that watchest over the human heart never to slumber or to sleep,— it is thou that takest from us the present, barrest to us the future, and knittest the eternal chain that binds us to the rock and the vulture of the past!

The evening came on still and dark; a breathless and heavy apprehension seemed gathered over the air; the full large clouds lay without motion in the dull sky, from between which, at long and scattered intervals, the wan stars looked out; a double shadow seemed to invest the grouped and gloomy trees that stood unwaving in the melancholy horizon. The waters of the lake lay heavy and unagitated, as the sleep of death; and the broken reflections of the abrupt and winding banks rested upon their bosoms, like the dream-like remembrance of a former existence.

The hour of the appointment was arrived: Falkland stood by the spot, gazing upon the lake before him; his cheek was flushed, his hand was parched and dry with the consuming fire within him; his pulse beat thick and rapidly; the demon of evil passions was upon his soul. He stood so lost in his own reflections, that he did not for some moments perceive the fond and tearful eye which was fixed upon him. On that brow and lip, thought seemed always so beautiful, so divine, that to disturb its repose was like a profanation of something holy; and though Emily came towards him with a light and hurried step, she paused involuntarily to gaze upon that noble countenance which realized her earliest visions of the beauty and majesty of love. He turned slowly, and perceived her; he came to her with his own peculiar smile; he drew her to his bosom in silence; he pressed his lips to her forehead: she leaned upon his bosom, and forgot all but him. Oh, if there be one feeling which makes Love, even guilty Love, a god, it is the knowledge that in the midst of this breathing world he reigns aloof and alone; and that those who are occupied with his worship know nothing of the pettiness, the strife, the

bustle, which pollute and agitate the ordinary inhabitants of earth! What was now to them, as they stood alone in the deep stillness of Nature, everything that had engrossed them before they had met and loved? Even in her the recollections of guilt and grief subsided; she was only sensible of one thought,—the presence of the being who stood beside her,—

“That ocean to the rivers of her soul.”

They sat down beneath an oak; Falkland stooped to kiss the cold and pale cheek that still rested upon his breast. His kisses were like lava: the turbulent and stormy elements of sin and desire were aroused even to madness within him. He clasped her still nearer to his bosom: her lips answered to his own; they caught perhaps something of the spirit which they received; her eyes were half-closed; the bosom heaved wildly that was pressed to his beating and burning heart. The skies grew darker and darker, as the night stole over them; one low roll of thunder broke upon the curtained and heavy air,—*they* did not hear it; and yet it was the knell of peace, virtue, hope, lost, lost forever to their souls!

They separated as they had never done before. In Emily's bosom there was a dreary void, a vast blank, over which there went a low deep voice like a Spirit's,—a sound indistinct and strange, that spoke a language she knew not; but felt that it told of woe, guilt, doom. Her senses were stunned; the vitality of her feelings was numbed and torpid,—the first herald of despair is insensibility. “To-morrow, then,” said Falkland,—and his voice for the first time seemed strange and harsh to her,—“we will fly hence forever. Meet me at daybreak; the carriage shall be in attendance; we cannot now unite too soon. Would that at this very moment we were prepared!”

“To-morrow!” repeated Emily, “at daybreak!” and as she clung to him, he felt her shudder; “to-morrow — ay — to-morrow!” One kiss, one embrace, one word,—*farewell*,—and they parted.

Falkland returned to L——. A gloomy foreboding rested upon his mind,—that dim and indescribable fear, which no earthly or human cause can explain, that shrinking within self, that vague terror of the future, that grappling as it were with some unknown shade, that wandering of the spirit—whither?—that cold, cold creeping dread—of what? As he entered the house, he met his confidential servant. He gave him orders respecting the flight of the morrow, and then retired into the chamber where he slept. It was an antique and large room: the wainscot was of oak; and one broad and high window looked over the expanse of country which stretched beneath. He sat himself by the casement in silence,—he opened it; the dull air came over his forehead, not with a sense of freshness, but, like the parching atmosphere of the east, charged with a weight and fever that sank heavy into his soul. He turned; he threw himself upon the bed, and placed his hands over his face. His thoughts were scattered into a thousand indistinct forms, but over all, there was one rapturous remembrance; and that was, that the morrow was to unite him forever to her whose possession had only rendered her more dear. Meanwhile, the hours rolled on; and as he lay thus silent and still, the clock of the distant church struck with a distinct and solemn sound upon his ear. It was the half-hour after midnight. At that moment an icy thrill ran, slow and curdling, through his veins. His heart, as if with a presentiment of what was to follow, beat violently, and then stopped; life itself seemed ebbing away; cold drops stood upon his forehead; his eyelids trembled, and the balls reeled and glazed, like those of a dying man; a deadly fear gathered over him, so that his flesh quivered, and every hair in his head seemed instinct with a separate life; the very marrow of his bones crept, and his blood waxed thick and thick, as if stagnating into an ebbless and frozen substance. He started in a wild and unutterable terror. There stood, at the far end of the room, a dim and thin shape like moonlight, without outline or form; still, and indistinct, and shadowy. He gazed on, speechless and motionless; his faculties and senses seemed locked in an unnatural trance.

By degrees the shape became clearer and clearer to his fixed and dilating eye. He saw, as through a floating and mist-like veil, the features of Emily; but how changed! — sunken and hueless, and set in death. The dropping lip, from which there seemed to trickle a deep red stain like blood; the lead-like and lifeless eye; the calm, awful, mysterious repose which broods over the aspect of the dead,— all grew, as it were, from the hazy cloud that encircled them for one, one brief, agonizing moment, and then as suddenly faded away. The spell passed from his senses. He sprang from the bed with a loud cry. All was quiet. There was not a trace of what he had witnessed. The feeble light of the skies rested upon the spot where the apparition had stood; upon that spot he stood also. He stamped upon the floor — it was firm beneath his footing. He passed his hands over his body — he was awake, he was unchanged: earth, air, heaven, were around him as before. What had thus gone over his soul to awe and overcome it to such weakness? To these questions his reason could return no answer. Bold by nature, and sceptical by philosophy, his mind gradually recovered its original tone. He did not give way to conjecture; he endeavoured to discard it; he sought by natural causes to account for the apparition he had seen or imagined; and as he felt the blood again circulating in its accustomed courses, and the night air coming chill over his feverish frame, he smiled with a stern and scornful bitterness at the terror which had so shaken, and the fancy which had so deluded, his mind.

Are there not “more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy”? A Spirit may hover in the air that we breathe; the depth of our most secret solitudes may be peopled by the invisible; our uprisings and our down-sittings may be marked by a witness from the grave. In our walks the dead may be behind us; in our banquets they may sit at the board; and the chill breath of the night wind that stirs the curtains of our bed may bear a message our senses receive not, from lips that once have pressed kisses on our own! Why is it that at moments there creeps over us an awe, a terror, overpowering, but undefined? Why is it that

we shudder without a cause, and feel the warm life-blood stand still in its courses? *Are the dead too near?* Do unearthly wings touch us as they flit around? Has our soul any intercourse which the body shares not, though it feels, with the supernatural world, mysterious revealings, unimaginable communion, a language of dread and power, shaking to its centre the fleshly barrier that divides the spirit from its race?

How fearful is the very life which we hold! We have our being beneath a cloud, and are a marvel even to ourselves. There is not a single thought which has its affixed limits. Like circles in the water, our researches weaken as they extend, and vanish at last into the immeasurable and unfathomable space of the vast unknown. We are like children in the dark; we tremble in a shadowy and terrible void, peopled with our fancies! Life is our real night, and the first gleam of the morning, which brings us certainty, *is death.*

Falkland sat the remainder of that night by the window, watching the clouds become gray as the dawn rose, and its earliest breeze awoke. He heard the trampling of the horses beneath; he drew his cloak round him, and descended. It was on a turning of the road beyond the lodge that he directed the carriage to wait, and he then proceeded to the place appointed. Emily was not yet there. He walked to and fro with an agitated and hurried step. The impression of the night had in a great measure been effaced from his mind, and he gave himself up without reserve to the warm and sanguine hopes which he had so much reason to conceive. He thought too, at moments, of those bright climates beneath which he designed their asylum, where the very air is music, and the light is like the colourings of love; and he associated the sighs of a mutual rapture with the fragrance of myrtles, and the breath of a Tuscan heaven. Time glided on. The hour was long past, yet Emily came not! The sun rose, and Falkland turned in dark and angry discontent from its beams. With every moment his impatience increased, and at last he could restrain himself no longer. He proceeded towards the house. He stood for some time at a distance; but as all

seemed still hushed in repose, he drew nearer and nearer till he reached the door: to his astonishment it was open. He saw forms passing rapidly through the hall. He heard a confused and indistinct murmur. At length he caught a glimpse of Mrs. St. John. He could command himself no more. He sprang forward, entered the door, the hall,—and caught her by a part of her dress. He could not speak, but his countenance said all which his lips refused. Mrs. St. John burst into tears when she saw him. "Good God!" she said, "why are you here? Is it possible you have yet learned—" Her voice failed her. Falkland had by this time recovered himself. He turned to the servants, who gathered around him. "Speak," he said calmly. "What has occurred?"

"My lady—my lady!" burst at once from several tongues. "What of her?" said Falkland, with a blanched cheek, but unchanging voice.

There was a pause. At that instant a man, whom Falkland recognized as the physician of the neighbourhood, passed at the opposite end of the hall. A light, a scorching and intolerable light, broke upon him. "She is dying,—she is dead, perhaps," he said, in a low sepulchral tone, turning his eye around till it had rested upon every one present. *Not one answered.* He paused a moment, as if stunned by a sudden shock, and then sprang up the stairs. He passed the boudoir, and entered the room where Emily slept. The shutters were only partially closed: a faint light broke through, and rested on the bed; beside it bent two women. Them he neither heeded nor saw. He drew aside the curtains. He beheld—the same as he had seen it in his vision of the night before—the changed and lifeless countenance of Emily Mandeville! That face, still so tenderly beautiful, was partially turned towards him. Some dark stains upon the lip and neck told how she had died,—the blood-vessel she had broken before had burst again. The bland and soft eyes, which for him never had but *one* expression, were closed; and the long and dishevelled tresses half hid, while they contrasted, that bosom, which had but the night before first learned to thrill beneath his own. Happier in her fate than she deserved, she

passed from this bitter life ere the punishment of her guilt had begun. She was not doomed to wither beneath the blight of shame nor the coldness of estranged affection. From him whom she had so worshipped, she was not condemned to bear wrong nor change. She died while his passion was yet in its spring,— before a blossom, a leaf, had faded; and she sank to repose while his kiss was yet warm upon her lip, and her last breath almost mingled with his sigh. For the woman who has erred, life has no exchange for such a death. Falkland stood mute and motionless; not one word of grief or horror escaped his lips. At length he bent down. He took the hand which lay outside the bed; he pressed it; it replied not to the pressure, but fell cold and heavy from his own. He put his cheek to her lips; not the faintest breath came from them; and then for the first time a change passed over his countenance: he pressed upon those lips one long and last kiss, and without word, or sign, or tear he turned from the chamber. Two hours afterwards he was found senseless upon the ground; it was upon the spot where he had met Emily the night before.

For weeks he knew nothing of this earth,— he was encompassed with the spectres of a terrible dream. All was confusion, darkness, horror,— a series and a change of torture! At one time he was hurried through the heavens in the womb of a fiery star, girt above and below and around with unextinguishable but unconsuming flames. Wherever he trod, as he wandered through his vast and blazing prison, the molten fire was his footing, and the breath of fire was his air. Flowers and trees and hills were in that world as in ours, but wrought from one lurid and intolerable light; and, scattered around, rose gigantic palaces and domes of the living flame, like the mansions of the city of Hell. With every moment there passed to and fro shadowy forms, on whose countenances was engraven unutterable anguish; but not a shriek, not a groan, rung through the red air; *for the doomed, who fed and inhabited the flames, were forbidden the consolation of voice.* Above there sat, fixed and black, a solid and impenetrable cloud,— *Night frozen into substance;* and from the midst

there hung a banner of a pale and sickly flame, on which was written "Forever." A river rushed rapidly beside him. He stooped to slake the agony of his thirst,—the waves *were waves of fire*; and, as he started from the burning draught, he longed to shriek aloud, *and could not*. Then he cast his despairing eyes above for mercy; and saw on the livid and motionless banner "Forever."

"A change came o'er the spirit of his dream,—"

he was suddenly borne up on the winds and storms to the oceans of an eternal winter. He fell stunned and unstruggling upon the ebbless and sluggish waves. Slowly and heavily they rose over him as he sank; then came the lengthened and suffocating torture of that drowning death,—the impotent and convulsive contest with the closing waters, the gurgle, the choking, the bursting of the pent breath, the flutter of the heart, its agony, *and its stillness*. He recovered. He was a thousand fathoms beneath the sea, chained to a rock round which the heavy waters rose as a wall. He felt his own flesh rot and decay, perishing from his limbs piece by piece; and he saw the coral banks, which it requires a thousand ages to form, rise slowly from their slimy bed, and spread atom by atom, till they became a shelter for the Leviathan: *their growth was his only record of eternity*; and ever and ever, around and above him, came vast and misshapen things,—the wonders of the secret deeps; and the sea serpent, the huge chimæra of the North, made its resting-place by his side, glaring upon him with a livid and death-like eye, wan, yet burning *as an expiring sun*. But over all, in every change, in every moment of that immortality, there was present one pale and motionless countenance, never turning from his own. The fiends of hell, the monsters of the hidden ocean, had no horror so awful *as the human face of the dead whom he had loved*.

The word of his sentence was gone forth. Alike through that delirium and its more fearful awakening, through the past, through the future, through the vigils of the joyless day and the broken dreams of the night, there was a charm

upon his soul, a hell within himself; and the curse of his sentence was — *never to forget!*

When Lady Emily returned home on that guilty and eventful night, she stole at once to her room; she dismissed her servant, and threw herself upon the ground in that deep despair which on this earth can never again know hope. She lay there without the power to weep, or the courage to pray — how long, she knew not. Like the period before creation, her mind was a chaos of jarring elements, and knew neither the method of reflection nor the division of time.

As she rose, she heard a slight knock at the door, and her husband entered. Her heart misgave her; and when she saw him close the door carefully before he approached her, she felt as if she could have sunk into the earth, alike from her internal shame and her fear of its detection.

Mr. Mandeville was a weak, commonplace character,— indifferent in ordinary matters, but, like most imbecile minds, violent and furious when aroused. “Is this, Madam, addressed to you?” he cried, in a voice of thunder, as he placed a letter before her (it was one of Falkland’s); “and this, and this, Madam?” said he, in a still louder tone, as he flung them out one after another from her own escritoire, which he had broken open.

Emily sank back, and gasped for breath. Mandeville rose, and, laughing fiercely, seized her by the arm. He grasped it with all his force. She uttered a faint scream of terror; he did not heed it. He flung her from him, and, as she fell upon the ground, the blood gushed in torrents from her lips. In the sudden change of feeling which alarm created, he raised her in his arms. *She was a corpse!* At that instant the clock struck upon his ear with a startling and solemn sound: *it was the half-hour after midnight!*

The grave is now closed upon that soft and erring heart, with its guiltiest secret unrevealed. She went to that last home with a blest and unblighted name; for her guilt was unknown, and her virtues are yet recorded in the memories of the Poor.

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They laid her in the stately vaults of her ancient line, and her bier was honoured with tears from hearts not less stricken, because their sorrow, if violent, was brief. For the dead there are many mourners, but only one monument,—the bosom which loved them *best*. The spot where the hearse rested, the green turf beneath, the surrounding trees, the gray tower of the village church, and the proud halls rising beyond,—all had witnessed the childhood, the youth, the bridal-day of the being whose last rites and solemnities they were to witness now. The very bell which rang for her birth had rung also for the marriage peal; it *now* tolled for her death. But a little while, and she had gone forth from that home of her young and unclouded years, amidst the acclamations and blessings of all, a bride, with the insignia of bridal pomp,—in the first bloom of her girlish beauty, in the first innocence of her unawakened heart,—weeping, not for the future she was entering, but for the past she was about to leave, and smiling through her tears, as if innocence had no business with grief. On the same spot where he had then waved his farewell, stood the father now. On the grass which they had then covered, flocked the peasants whose wants her childhood had relieved; by the same priest who had blessed her bridals, bent the bridegroom who had plighted its vow. There was not a tree, not a blade of grass withered. The day itself was bright and glorious; such was it when it smiled upon her nuptials. And *she—she*—but four little years, and all youth's innocence darkened, and earth's beauty come to dust! Alas! not for her, but the mourner whom she left! In death even love is forgotten; but in life there is no bitterness so utter as to feel everything is unchanged, except the One Being who was the soul of all,—to know *the world* is the same, but that *its sunshine* is departed.

The noon was still and sultry. Along the narrow street of the small village of Lodar poured the wearied but yet unconquered band, which embodied in that district of Spain the last hope and energy of freedom. The countenances of the soldiers were haggard and dejected; they displayed even less

of the vanity than their accoutrements exhibited of the pomp and circumstances of war. Yet their garments were such as even the peasants had disdained: covered with blood and dust, and tattered into a thousand rags, they betokened nothing of chivalry but its endurance of hardship; even the rent and sullied banners drooped sullenly along their staves, as if the winds themselves had become the minions of fortune, and disdained to swell the insignia of those whom she had deserted. The glorious music of battle was still. An air of dispirited and defeated enterprise hung over the whole array.

"Thank Heaven," said the chief, who closed the last file as it marched on to its scanty refreshment and brief repose, — "thank Heaven, we are at least out of the reach of pursuit; and the mountains, those last retreats of liberty, are before us!"

"True, Don Rafael," replied the youngest of two officers who rode by the side of the commander; "and if we can cut our passage to Mina, we may yet plant the standard of the Constitution in Madrid."

"Ay," added the elder officer, "and sing Riego's hymn in the place of the Escorial!"

"Our sons may!" said the chief, who was indeed Riego himself, "but for us all hope is over! Were we united, we could scarcely make head against the armies of France; and divided as we are, the wonder is that we have escaped so long. Hemmed in by invasion, our great enemy has been ourselves. Such has been the hostility faction has created between Spaniard and Spaniard, that we seem to have none left to waste upon Frenchmen. We cannot establish freedom if men are willing to be slaves. We have no hope, Don Alphonso,—no hope—but that of death!"

As Riego concluded this desponding answer, so contrary to his general enthusiasm, the younger officer rode on among the soldiers, cheering them with words of congratulation and comfort; ordering their several divisions; cautioning them to be prepared at a moment's notice; and impressing on their remembrance those small but essential points of discipline, which a Spanish troop might well be supposed to disregard.

When Riego and his companion entered the small and miserable hovel which constituted the head-quarters of the place, this man still remained without; and it was not till he had slackened the girths of his Andalusian horse, and placed before it the undainty provender which the *écurie* afforded, that he thought of rebinding more firmly the bandages wound around a deep and painful sabre-cut in the left arm, which for several hours had been wholly neglected. The officer whom Riego had addressed by the name of Alphonso came out of the hut just as his comrade was vainly endeavouring, with his teeth and one hand, to replace the ligature. As he assisted him, he said, "You know not, my dear Falkland, how bitterly I reproach myself for having ever persuaded you to a cause where contest seems to have no hope, and danger no glory."

Falkland smiled bitterly. "Do not deceive yourself, my dear uncle," said he; "your persuasions would have been unavailing but for the suggestions of my own wishes. I am not one of those enthusiasts who entered on your cause with high hopes and chivalrous designs: I asked but forgetfulness and excitement,—I have found them! I would not exchange a single pain I have endured for what would have constituted the pleasures of other men. But enough of this. What time, think you, have we for repose?"

"Till the evening," answered Alphonso; "our route will then most probably be directed to the Sierra Morena. The general is extremely weak and exhausted, and needs a longer rest than we shall gain. It is singular that with such weak health he should endure so great an excess of hardship and fatigue."

During this conversation they entered the hut. Riego was already asleep. As they seated themselves to the wretched provision of the place, a distant and indistinct noise was heard. It came first on their ears like the birth of the mountain wind,—low and hoarse and deep; gradually it grew loud and louder, and mingled with other sounds which they defined too well,—the hum, the murmur, the trampling of steeds, the ringing echoes of the rapid march of armed men!

They heard and knew the foe was upon them! — a moment more, and the drum beat to arms.

"By Saint Pelagio," cried Riego, who had sprung from his light sleep at the first sound of the approaching danger, unwilling to believe his fears, "it cannot be! the French are far behind;" and then, as the drum beat, his voice suddenly changed: "The enemy! the enemy! D'Aguilar, to horse!" and with those words he rushed out of the hut. The soldiers, who had scarcely begun to disperse, were soon re-collected.

In the mean while the French commander, D'Argout, taking advantage of the surprise he had occasioned, poured on his troops, which consisted solely of cavalry, undaunted and undelayed by the fire of the posts. On, on they drove like a swift cloud charged with thunder, and gathering wrath as it hurried by, before it burst in tempest on the beholders. They did not pause till they reached the farther extremity of the village; there the Spanish infantry were already formed into two squares. "Halt!" cried the French commander; the troop suddenly stopped, confronting the nearer square. There was one brief pause,—the moment before the storm. "Charge!" said D'Argout, and the word rang throughout the line up to the clear and placid sky. Up flashed the steel like lightning; on went the troop like the dash of a thousand waves when the sun is upon them; and before the breath of the riders was thrice drawn, came the crash, the shock, the slaughter of battle. The Spaniards made but a faint resistance to the impetuosity of the onset: they broke on every side beneath the force of the charge, like the weak barriers of a rapid and swollen stream; and the French troops, after a brief but bloody victory (joined by a second squadron from the rear), advanced immediately upon the Spanish cavalry. Falkland was by the side of Riego. As the troop advanced, it would have been curious to notice the contrast of expression in the face of each; the Spaniard's features lighted up with the daring enthusiasm of his nature; every trace of their usual languor and exhaustion vanished beneath the unconquerable soul that blazed out the brighter for the debility of the frame; the brow knit, the eye flashing, the lip quivering:

and close beside, the calm, stern, passionless repose that brooded over the severe yet noble beauty of Falkland's countenance. To him danger brought scorn, not enthusiasm; he rather despised than defied it. "The dastards! they waver!" said Riego, in an accent of despair, as his troop faltered beneath the charge of the French; and so saying, he spurred his steed on to the foremost line. The contest was longer, but not less decisive, than the one just concluded. The Spaniards, thrown into confusion by the first shock, never recovered themselves. Falkland, who, in his anxiety to rally and inspirit the soldiers, had advanced with two other officers beyond the ranks, was soon surrounded by a detachment of dragoons; the wound in his left arm scarcely suffered him to guide his horse; he was in the most imminent danger. At that moment D'Aguilar, at the head of his own immediate followers, cut his way into the circle, and covered Falkland's retreat; another detachment of the enemy came up, and they were a second time surrounded. In the mean while, the main body of the Spanish cavalry were flying in all directions, and Riego's deep voice was heard at intervals, through the columns of smoke and dust, calling and exhorting them in vain. D'Aguilar and his scanty troop, after a desperate skirmish, broke again through the enemy's line drawn up against their retreat. The rank closed after them, like waters when the object that pierced them has sunk. Falkland and his two companions were again environed: he saw his comrades cut to the earth before him. He pulled up his horse for one moment, clove down with one desperate blow the dragoon with whom he was engaged, and then setting his spurs to the very rowels into his horse, dashed at once through the circle of his foes. His remarkable presence of mind, and the strength and sagacity of his horse, befriended him. Three sabres flashed before him, and glanced harmless from his raised sword, like lightning on the water. The circle was passed! As he galloped towards Riego, his horse started from a dead body that lay across his path. He reined up for one instant, for the countenance, which looked upwards, struck him as familiar. What was his horror, when

in that livid and distorted face he recognized his uncle! The thin grizzled hairs were besprent with gore and brains, and the blood yet oozed from the spot where the ball had passed through his temple. Falkland had but a brief interval for grief; the pursuers were close behind: he heard the snort of the foremost horse before he again put spurs into his own. Riego was holding a hasty consultation with his principal officers. As Falkland rode breathless up to them, they had decided on the conduct expedient to adopt. They led the remaining square of infantry towards the chain of mountains against which the village, as it were, leaned; and there the men dispersed in all directions. "For us," said Riego to the followers on horseback who gathered around him,— "for us the mountains still promise a shelter. We must ride, gentlemen, for our lives — Spain will want *them* yet."

Wearied and exhausted as they were, that small and devoted troop fled on into the recesses of the mountains for the remainder of that day,— twenty men out of the two thousand who had halted at Lodar. As the evening stole over them, they entered into a narrow defile; the tall hills rose on every side, covered with the glory of the setting sun, as if Nature rejoiced to grant her bulwarks as a protection to liberty. A small clear stream ran through the valley, sparkling with the last smile of the departing day; and ever and anon, from the scattered shrubs and the fragrant herbage, came the vesper music of the birds, and the hum of the wild bee.

Parched with thirst and drooping with fatigue, the wanderers sprung forward with one simultaneous cry of joy to the glassy and refreshing wave which burst so unexpectedly upon them; and it was resolved that they should remain for some hours in a spot where all things invited them to the repose they so imperiously required. They flung themselves at once upon the grass; and such was their exhaustion, that rest was almost synonymous with sleep. Falkland alone could not immediately forget himself in repose; the face of his uncle, ghastly and disfigured, glared upon his eyes whenever he closed them. Just, however, as he was sinking into an unquiet and fitful doze, he heard steps approaching; he

started up, and perceived two men, one a peasant, the other in the dress of a hermit. They were the first human beings the wanderers had met; and when Falkland gave the alarm to Riego, who slept beside him, it was immediately proposed to detain them as guides to the town of Carolina, where Riego had hopes of finding effectual assistance, or the means of ultimate escape. The hermit and his companion refused, with much vehemence, the office imposed upon them; but Riego ordered them to be forcibly detained. He had afterwards reason bitterly to regret this compulsion.

Midnight came on in all the gorgeous beauty of a southern heaven, and beneath its stars they renewed their march.

As Falkland rode by the side of Riego, the latter said to him in a low voice, "There is yet escape for you and my followers; none for me: they have set a price on my head, and the moment I leave these mountains, I enter upon my own destruction."

"No, Rafael!" replied Falkland; "you can yet fly to England, that asylum of the free, though ally of the despotic; the abettor of tyranny, but the shelter of its victims!" Riego answered, with the same faint and dejected tone, "I care not now what becomes of me! I have lived solely for Freedom; I have made her my mistress, my hope, my dream; I have no existence but in her. With the last effort of my country let me perish also! I have lived to view liberty not only defeated, but derided; I have seen its efforts not aided, but mocked. In my own country, those only who wore it have been respected who used it as a covering to ambition. In other nations, the free stood aloof when the charter of their own rights was violated in the invasion of ours. I cannot forget that the senate of that England, where you promise me a home, rang with insulting plaudits when her statesman breathed his ridicule on our weakness, not his sympathy for our cause; and I — I,— fanatic, dreamer, enthusiast, as I may be called, whose whole life has been one unremitting struggle for the opinion I have adopted — am at least not so blinded by my infatuation but I can see the mockery it incurs. If I die on the scaffold to-morrow, I shall have nothing of mar-

tyrdom but its doom; not the triumph, the incense, the immortality of popular applause: I should have no hope to support me at such a moment, gleaned from the glories of the future,— nothing but one stern and prophetic conviction of the vanity of that tyranny by which my sentence will be pronounced."

Riego paused for a moment before he resumed, and his pale and death-like countenance received an awful and unnatural light from the intensity of the feeling that swelled and burned within him. His figure was drawn up to its full height, and his voice rang through the lonely hills with a deep and hollow sound, that had in it a tone of prophecy, as he resumed: "It is in vain that they oppose OPINION; anything else they may subdue. They may conquer wind, water, nature itself; but to the progress of that secret, subtle, pervading spirit, their imagination can devise, their strength can accomplish, no bar: *its votaries* they may seize, they may destroy; *itself* they cannot touch. If they check it in one place, it invades them in another. They cannot build a wall across the whole earth; and, even if they could, it would pass over its summit! Chains cannot bind it,— for it is immaterial; dungeons enclose it,— for it is universal. Over the fagot and the scaffold, over the bleeding bodies of its defenders which they pile against its path, it sweeps on with a noiseless but unceasing march. Do they levy armies against it, it presents to them no palpable object to oppose. *Its camp is the universe; its asylum is the bosoms of their own soldiers.* Let them depopulate, destroy as they please, to each extremity of the earth; but as long as they have a single supporter themselves, as long as they leave a single individual into whom that spirit can enter, so long they will have the same labours to encounter, and the same enemy to subdue."

As Riego's voice ceased, Falkland gazed upon him with a mingled pity and admiration. Sour and ascetic as was the mind of that hopeless and disappointed man, he felt somewhat of a kindred glow at the pervading and holy enthusiasm of the patriot to whom he had listened; and though it was the character of his own philosophy to question the purity of

human motives, and to smile at the more vivid emotions he had ceased to feel, he bowed his soul in homage to those principles whose sanctity he acknowledged, and to that devotion of zeal and fervour with which their defender cherished and enforced them. Falkland had joined the constitutionalists with respect, but not ardour, for their cause. He demanded excitation; he cared little where he found it. He stood in this world a being who mixed in all its changes, performed all its offices, took, as if by the force of superior mechanical power, a leading share in its events; but whose thoughts and soul were as offsprings of another planet, imprisoned in a human form, and *longing for their home!*

As they rode on, Riego continued to converse with that imprudent unreserve which the openness and warmth of his nature made natural to him; not one word escaped the hermit and the peasant (whose name was Lopez Lara) as they rode on two mules behind Falkland and Riego. "Remember," whispered the hermit to his comrade, "the reward!" "I do," muttered the peasant.

Throughout the whole of that long and dreary night, the wanderers rode on incessantly, and found themselves at day-break near a farmhouse: this was Lara's own home. They made the peasant Lara knock; his own brother opened the door. Fearful as they were of the detection to which so numerous a party might conduce, only Riego, another officer (Don Luis de Sylva), and Falkland entered the house. The latter, whom nothing ever seemed to render weary or forgetful, fixed his cold stern eye upon the two brothers, and, seeing some signs pass between them, locked the door, and so prevented their escape. For a few hours they reposed in the stables with their horses, their drawn swords by their sides. On waking, Riego found it absolutely necessary that his horse should be shod. Lopez started up, and offered to lead it to Arguillas for that purpose.

"No," said Riego, who, though naturally imprudent, partook in this instance of Falkland's habitual caution: "your brother shall go and bring hither the farrier."

Accordingly the brother went: he soon returned. "The

farrier," he said, "was already on the road." Riego and his companions, who were absolutely fainting with hunger, sat down to breakfast; but Falkland, who had finished first, and who had eyed the man since his return with the most scrutinizing attention, withdrew towards the window, looking out from time to time with a telescope which they had carried about them, and urging them impatiently to finish.

"Why?" said Riego, "famished men are good for nothing, either to fight or fly — and we *must* wait for the farrier."

"True," said Falkland, "but —" he stopped abruptly. Sylva had his eyes on his face at that moment. Falkland's colour suddenly changed: he turned round with a loud cry. "Up! up! Riego! Sylva! We are undone,— the soldiers are upon us!"

"Arm!" cried Riego, starting up.

At that moment, Lopez and his brother seized their own carbines, and levelled them at the betrayed constitutionalists. "The first who moves," cried the former, "is a dead man!"

"Fools!" said Falkland, with a calm bitterness, advancing deliberately towards them. He moved only three steps,— Lopez fired. Falkland staggered a few paces, recovered himself, sprang towards Lara, clove him at one blow from the skull to the jaw, and fell, with his victim, lifeless upon the floor.

"Enough!" said Riego to the remaining peasant; "we are your prisoners; bind us!" In two minutes more the soldiers entered, and they were conducted to Carolina. Fortunately Falkland was known, when at Paris, to a French officer of high rank then at Carolina. He was removed to the Frenchman's quarters. Medical aid was instantly procured. The first examination of his wound was decisive; recovery was hopeless!

Night came on again, with her pomp of light and shade,— the night that for Falkland had no morrow. One solitary lamp burned in the chamber where he lay alone with God and his own heart. He had desired his couch to be placed by the window and requested his attendants to withdraw. The gentle and balmy air stole over him, as free and bland as if it

were to breathe for him forever; and the silver moonlight came gleaming through the lattice, and played upon his wan brow, like the tenderness of a bride that sought to kiss him to repose. "In a few hours," thought he, as he lay gazing on the high stars which seemed such silent witnesses of an eternal and unfathomed mystery,— "in a few hours either this feverish and wayward spirit will be at rest forever, or it will have commenced a new career in an untried and unimaginable existence! In a very few hours I may be amongst the very heavens that I survey,—a part of their own glory, a new link in a new order of beings, breathing amidst the elements of a more gorgeous world, arrayed myself in the attributes of a purer and diviner nature, a wanderer among the planets, an associate of angels, the beholder of the arcana of the great God,—redeemed, regenerate, immortal, or—*dust*!"

"There is no Oedipus to solve the enigma of life. We are — whence came we? We are *not* — whither do we go? All things *in* our existence have their object: existence has none. We live, move, beget our species, perish — and *for what?* We ask the past its moral; we question the gone years of the reason of our being, and from the clouds of a thousand ages there goes forth no answer. Is it merely to pant beneath this weary load; to sicken of the sun; to grow old; to drop like leaves into the grave; and to bequeath to our heirs the worn garments of toil and labour that we leave behind? Is it to sail forever on the same sea, ploughing the ocean of time with new furrows, and feeding its billows with new wrecks, or—" and his thoughts paused, blinded and bewildered.

No man in whom the mind has not been broken by the decay of the body has approached death in full consciousness, as Falkland did that moment, and not thought intensely on the change he was about to undergo; and yet what new discoveries upon that subject has any one bequeathed us? There the wildest imaginations are driven from originality into triteness; there all minds — the frivolous and the strong, the busy and the idle — are compelled into the same path and limit of reflection. Upon that unknown and voiceless gulf of inquiry broods an eternal and impenetrable gloom; no wind breathes

over it, no wave agitates its stillness: over the dead and solemn calm there is no change propitious to adventure; there goes forth no vessel of research, which is not driven, baffled and broken, again upon the shore.

The moon waxed high in her career. Midnight was gathering slowly over the earth; the beautiful, the mystic hour, blent with a thousand memories, hallowed by a thousand dreams, made tender to remembrance by the vows our youth breathed beneath its star, and solemn by the olden legends which are linked to its majesty and peace,—*the hour in which men should die*; the isthmus between two worlds; the climax of the past day; the verge of that which is to come; wrapping us in sleep after a weary travail, and promising us a morrow *which since the first birth of Creation has never failed*. As the minutes glided on, Falkland felt himself grow gradually weaker and weaker. The pain of his wound had ceased, but a deadly sickness gathered over his heart; the room reeled before his eyes, and the damp chill mounted from his feet up, — up to the breast in which the life-blood waxed dull and thick.

As the hand of the clock pointed to *the half-hour after midnight*, the attendants who waited in the adjoining room heard a faint cry. They rushed hastily into Falkland's chamber; they found him stretched half out of the bed. His hand was raised towards the opposite wall; it dropped gradually as they approached him; and his brow, which was at first stern and bent, softened, shade by shade, into his usual serenity. But the dim film gathered fast over his eye, and the last coldness upon his limbs. He strove to raise himself as if to speak; the effort failed, and he fell motionless on his face. They stood by the bed for some moments in silence; at length they raised him. Placed against his heart was an open locket of dark hair, which one hand still pressed convulsively. They looked upon his countenance — a single glance was sufficient; it was hushed, proud, passionless, the seal of Death was upon it.

THE END.

CALDERON, THE COURTIER.



CALDERON, THE COURTIER.

A TALE.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANTE-CHAMBER.

THE Tragi-Comedy of Court Intrigue, which had ever found its principal theatre in Spain since the accession of the House of Austria to the throne, was represented with singular complication of incident and brilliancy of performance during the reign of Philip the Third. That monarch, weak, indolent, and superstitious, left the reins of government in the hands of the Duke of Lerma. The Duke of Lerma, in his turn, mild, easy, ostentatious, and shamefully corrupt, resigned the authority he had thus received to Roderigo Calderon, an able and resolute upstart, whom nature and fortune seemed equally to favour and endow. But not more to his talents, which were great, than to the policy of religious persecution which he had supported and enforced, Roderigo Calderon owed his promotion. The king and the Inquisition had, some years before our story opens, resolved upon the general expulsion of the Moriscos,—the wealthiest, the most active, the most industrious portion of the population.

"I would sooner," said the bigoted king,—and his words were hallowed by the enthusiasm of the Church,—"depopulate my kingdom than suffer it to harbour a single infidel."

The Duke de Lerma entered into the scheme that lost to Spain many of her most valuable subjects, with the zeal of a pious Catholic expectant of the cardinal's hat, which he after-

wards obtained. But to this scheme Calderon brought an energy, a decision, a vehemence, and sagacity of hatred that savoured more of personal vengeance than religious persecution. His perseverance in this good work established him firmly in the king's favour; and in this he was supported by the friendship not only of Lerma, but of Fray Louis de Aliaga, a renowned Jesuit, and confessor to the king. The disasters and distresses occasioned by this barbarous crusade, which crippled the royal revenues, and seriously injured the estates of the principal barons, from whose lands the industrious and intelligent Moriscos were expelled, ultimately centred a deep and general hatred upon Calderon. But his extraordinary address and vigorous energies, his perfect mastery of the science of intrigue, not only sustained, but continued to augment, his power. Though the king was yet in the prime of middle age, his health was infirm and his life precarious. Calderon had contrived, while preserving the favour of the reigning monarch, to establish himself as the friend and companion of the heir apparent. In this, indeed, he had affected to yield to the policy of the king himself; for Philip the Third had a wholesome terror of the possible ambition of his son, who early evinced talents which might have been formidable but for passions which urged him into the most vicious pleasures and the most extravagant excesses. The craft of the king was satisfied by the device of placing about the person of the Infant one devoted to himself; nor did his conscience, pious as he was, revolt at the profligacy which his favourite was said to participate, and, perhaps, to encourage, since the less popular the prince, the more powerful the king.

But all this while there was formed a powerful cabal against both the Duke of Lerma and Don Roderigo Calderon in a quarter where it might least have been anticipated. The cardinal-duke, naturally anxious to cement and perpetuate his authority, had placed his son, the Duke d'Uzeda, in a post that gave him constant access to the monarch. The prospect of power made Uzeda eager to seize at once upon all its advantages; and it became the object of his life to supplant his

father. This would have been easy enough but for the genius and vigilance of Calderon, whom he hated as a rival, disdained as an upstart, and dreaded as a foe. Philip was soon aware of the contest between the two factions; but, in the true spirit of Spanish kingcraft, he took care to play one against the other. Nor could Calderon, powerful as he was, dare openly to seek the ruin of Uzeda; while Uzeda, more rash, and, perhaps, more ingenuous, entered into a thousand plots for the downfall of the prime favourite.

The frequent missions, principally into Portugal, in which of late Calderon had been employed, had allowed Uzeda to encroach more and more upon the royal confidence; while the very means which Don Roderigo had adopted to perpetuate his influence, by attaching himself to the prince, necessarily distracted his attention from the intrigues of his rival. Perhaps, indeed, the greatness of Calderon's abilities made him too arrogantly despise the machinations of the duke, who, though not without some capacities as a courtier, was wholly incompetent to those duties of a minister on which he had set his ambition and his grasp.

Such was the state of parties in the Court of Philip the Third at the time in which we commence our narrative in the ante-chamber of Don Roderigo Calderon.

"It is not to be endured!" said Don Felix de Castro, an old noble, whose sharp features and diminutive stature proclaimed the purity of his blood and the antiquity of his descent.

"Just three-quarters of an hour and five minutes have I waited for audience to a fellow who would once have thought himself honoured if I had ordered him to call my coach," said Don Diego Sarmiento de Mendoza.

"Then, if it chafe you so much, gentlemen, why come you here at all? I dare say Don Roderigo can dispense with your attendance."

This was said bluntly by a young noble of good mien, whose impetuous and irritable temperament betrayed itself by an impatience of gesture and motion unusual amongst his countrymen. Sometimes he walked, with uneven strides, to and fro the apartments, unheeding the stately groups whom he

jostled, or the reproving looks that he attracted; sometimes he paused abruptly, raised his eyes, muttered, twitched his cloak, or played with his sword-knot; or, turning abruptly round upon his solemn neighbours, as some remark on his strange bearing struck his ear, brought the blood to many a haughty cheek by his stern gaze of defiance and disdain. It was easy to perceive that this personage belonged to the tribe — rash, vain, and young — who are eager to take offence, and to provoke quarrel. Nevertheless, the cavalier had noble and great qualities. A stranger to courts, in the camp he was renowned for a chivalrous generosity and an extravagant valour, that emulated the ancient heroes of Spanish romaut and song. His was a dawn that promised a hot noon and a glorious eve. The name of this brave soldier was Martin Fonseca. He was of an ancient but impoverished house, and related in a remote degree to the Duke de Lerma. In his earliest youth he had had cause to consider himself the heir to a wealthy uncle on his mother's side; and with those expectations, while still but a boy, he had been invited to court by the cardinal-duke. Here, however, the rude and blunt sincerity of his bearing had so greatly shocked the formal hypocrisies of the court, and had more than once so seriously offended the minister, that his powerful kinsman gave up all thought of pushing Fonseca's fortunes at Madrid, and meditated some plausible excuse for banishing him from court. At this time the rich uncle, hitherto childless, married a second time, and was blessed with an heir. It was no longer necessary to keep terms with Don Martin; and he suddenly received an order to join the army on the frontiers. Here his courage soon distinguished him; but his honest nature still stood in the way of his promotion. Several years elapsed, and his rise had been infinitely slower than that of men not less inferior to him in birth than merit. Some months since, he had repaired to Madrid to enforce his claims upon the government; but instead of advancing his suit, he had contrived to effect a serious breach with the cardinal, and been abruptly ordered back to the camp. Once more he appeared at Madrid; but this time it was not to plead desert and demand honours.

In any country but Spain under the reign of Philip the Third, Martin Fonseca would have risen early to high fortunes. But, as we have said, his talents were not those of the flatterer or the hypocrite; and it was a matter of astonishment to the calculators round him to see Don Martin Fonseca in the anteroom of Roderigo Calderon, Count Oliva, Marquis de Siete Iglesias, secretary to the King, and parasite and favourite of the Infant of Spain.

"Why come you here at all?" repeated the young soldier.

"Señor," answered Don Felix de Castro, with great gravity, "we have business with Don Roderigo. Men of our station must attend to the affairs of the State, no matter by whom transacted."

"That is, you must crawl on your knees to ask for pensions and governorships, and transact the affairs of the State by putting your hands into its coffers."

"Señor!" growled Don Felix, angrily, as his hand played with his sword-belt.

"Tush!" said the young man, scornfully turning on his heel.

The folding-doors were thrown open, and all conversation ceased at the entrance of Don Roderigo Calderon.

This remarkable personage had risen from the situation of a confidential scribe to the Duke of Lerma to the nominal rank of secretary to the king,—to the real station of autocrat of Spain. The birth of the favourite of fortune was exceedingly obscure. He had long affected to conceal it; but when he found curiosity had proceeded into serious investigation of his origin, he had suddenly appeared to make a virtue of necessity; proclaimed of his own accord that his father was a common soldier of Valladolid, and even invited to Madrid, and lodged in his own palace, his low-born progenitor. This prudent frankness disarmed malevolence on the score of birth. But when the old soldier died, rumours went abroad that he had confessed on his death-bed that he was not in any way related to Calderon; that he had submitted to an imposture which secured to his old age so respectable and luxurious an asylum; and that he knew not for what end

Calderon had forced upon him the honours of spurious parentship. This tale, which, ridiculed by most, was yet believed by some, gave rise to darker reports concerning one on whom the eyes of all Spain were fixed. It was supposed that he had some motive beyond that of shame at their meanness to conceal his real origin and name. What could be that motive, if not the dread of discovery for some black and criminal offence connected with his earlier youth, and for which he feared the prosecution of the law? They who affected most to watch his exterior averred that often, in his gayest revels and proudest triumphs, his brow would lower, his countenance change, and it was only by a visible and painful effort that he could restore his mind to its self-possession. His career, which evinced an utter contempt for the ordinary rules and scruples that curb even adventurers into a seeming of honesty and virtue, appeared in some way to justify these reports. But, at times, flashes of sudden and brilliant magnanimity broke forth to bewilder the curious, to puzzle the examiners of human character, and to contrast the general tenor of his ambitious and remorseless ascent to power. His genius was confessed by all; but it was a genius that in no way promoted the interests of his country. It served only to prop, defend, and advance himself; to baffle difficulties; to defeat foes; to convert every accident, every chance, into new stepping-stones in his course. Whatever his birth, it was evident that he had received every advantage of education; and scholars extolled his learning and boasted of his patronage. While, more recently, if the daring and wild excesses of the profligate prince were, on the one hand, popularly imputed to the guidance of Calderon, and increased the hatred generally conceived against him, so, on the other hand, his influence over the future monarch seemed to promise a new lease to his authority, and struck fear into the councils of his foes. In fact, the power of the upstart marquis appeared so firmly rooted, the career before him so splendid, that there were not wanted whisperers who, in addition to his other crimes, ascribed to Roderigo Calderon the assistance of the black art. But the black art in which that subtle

courtier was a proficient in one that dispenses with necromancy. It was the art of devoting the highest intellect to the most selfish purposes,—an art that thrives tolerably well for a time in the great world!

He had been for several weeks absent from Madrid on a secret mission; and to this, his first public levee on his return, thronged all the rank and chivalry of Spain.

The crowd gave way, as, with haughty air, in the maturity of manhood, the Marquis de Siete Iglesias moved along. He disdained all accessories of dress to enhance the effect of his singularly striking exterior. His mantle and vest of black cloth, made in the simplest fashion, were unadorned with the jewels that then constituted the ordinary insignia of rank. His hair, bright and glossy as the raven's plume, curled back from the lofty and commanding brow, which, save by one deep wrinkle between the eyes, was not only as white but as smooth as marble. His features were aquiline and regular; and the deep olive of his complexion seemed pale and clear when contrasted by the rich jet of the mustache and pointed beard. The lightness of his tall and slender but muscular form made him appear younger than he was; and had it not been for the supercilious and scornful arrogance of air which so seldom characterizes gentle birth, Calderon might have mingled with the loftiest magnates of Europe and seemed to the observer the stateliest of the group. It was one of those rare forms that are made to command the one sex and fascinate the other. But, on a deeper scrutiny, the restlessness of the brilliant eye, the quiver of the upper lip, a certain abruptness of manner and speech, might have shown that greatness had brought suspicion as well as pride. The spectators beheld the huntsman on the height,—the huntsman saw the abyss below, and respiration with difficulty the air above.

The courtiers one by one approached the marquis, who received them with very unequal courtesy. To the common herd he was sharp, dry, and bitter; to the great he was obsequious, yet with a certain grace and manliness of bearing that elevated even the character of servility; and all the

while, as he bowed low to a Medina or a Guzman, there was a half imperceptible mockery lurking in the corners of his mouth, which seemed to imply that while his policy cringed, his heart despised. To two or three, whom he either personally liked or honestly esteemed, he was familiar, but brief, in his address; to those whom he had cause to detest or to dread — his foes, his underminers — he assumed a yet greater frankness, mingled with the most caressing insinuation of voice and manner.

Apart from the herd, with folded arms, and an expression of countenance in which much admiration was blent with some curiosity and a little contempt, Don Martin Fonseca gazed upon the favourite.

"I have done this man a favour," thought he; "I have contributed towards his first rise,— I am now his suppliant. 'Faith! I, who have never found sincerity or gratitude in the camp, come to seek those hidden treasures at a court! Well, we are strange puppets, we mortals!"

Don Diego Sarmiento de Mendoza had just received the smiling salutation of Calderon, when the eye of the latter fell upon the handsome features of Fonseca. The blood mounted to his brow; he hastily promised Don Diego all that he desired, and hurrying back through the crowd, retired to his private cabinet. The levee was broken up.

As Fonseca, who had caught the glance of the secretary, and who drew no favourable omen from his sudden evanishment, slowly turned to depart with the rest, a young man, plainly dressed, touched him on the shoulder.

"You are Señor Don Martin Fonseca?"

"The same."

"Follow me, if it please you, señor, to my master, Don Roderigo Calderon."

Fonseca's face brightened; he obeyed the summons; and in another moment he was in the cabinet of the Sejanus of Spain.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOVER AND THE CONFIDANT.

CALDERON received the young soldier at the door of his chamber with marked and almost affectionate respect.

"Don Martin," said he, and there seemed a touch of true feeling in the tremor of his rich sweet voice, "I owe you the greatest debt one man can incur to another,—it was your hand that set before my feet their first stepping-stone to power. I date my fortunes from the hour in which I was placed in your father's house as your preceptor. When the cardinal-duke invited you to Madrid, I was your companion; and when, afterwards, you joined the army, and required no longer the services of the peaceful scholar, you demanded of your illustrious kinsman the single favour,—to provide for Calderon. I had already been fortunate enough to win the countenance of the duke, and from that day my rise was rapid. Since then we have never met. Dare I hope that it is now in the power of Calderon to prove himself not ungrateful?"

"Yes," said Fonseca, eagerly; "it is in your power to save me from the most absolute wretchedness that can befall me. It is in your power — at least I think so — to render me the happiest of men!"

"Be seated, I pray you, señor. And how? I am your servant."

"Thou knowest," said Fonseca, "that, though the kinsman, I am not the favourite, of the Duke of Lerma?"

"Nay, nay," interrupted Calderon, softly, and with a bland smile; "you misunderstand my illustrious patron: he loves you, but not your indiscretions."

"Yes, honesty is very indiscreet! I cannot stoop to the life of the ante-chamber; I cannot, like the Duke of Lerma,

detest my nearest relative if his shadow cross the line of my interests. I am of the race of Pelayo, not Oppas; and my profession, rather that of an ancient Persian than a modern Spaniard, is to manage the steed, to wield the sword, and to speak the truth."

There was an earnestness and gallantry in the young man's aspect, manner, and voice, as he thus spoke, which afforded the strongest contrast to the inscrutable brow and artificial softness of Calderon; and which, indeed, for the moment, occasioned that crafty and profound adventurer an involuntary feeling of self-humiliation.

"But," continued Fonseca, "let this pass: I come to my story and my request. Do you, or do you not know, that I have been for some time attached to Beatriz Coello?"

"Beatriz," repeated Calderon, abstractedly, with an altered countenance, "it is a sweet name,— it was my mother's!"

"Your mother's! I thought to have heard her name was Mary Sandalen?"

"True,— Mary Beatriz Sandalen," replied Calderon, indifferently. "But proceed. I heard, after your last visit to Madrid, when, owing to my own absence in Portugal, I was not fortunate enough to see you, that you had offended the duke by desiring an alliance unsuitable to your birth. Who, then, is this Beatriz Coello?"

"An orphan of humble origin and calling. In infancy she was left to the care of a woman who, I believe, had been her nurse; they were settled in Seville, and the old *gouvernante's* labours in embroidery maintained them both till Beatriz was fourteen. At that time the poor woman was disabled by a stroke of palsy from continuing her labours, and Beatriz, good child, yearning to repay the obligation she had received, in her turn sought to maintain her protectress. She possessed the gift of a voice wonderful for its sweetness. This gift came to the knowledge of the superintendent of the theatre at Seville: he made her the most advantageous proposals to enter upon the stage. Beatriz, innocent child, was unaware of the perils of that profession; she accepted eagerly the means that would give comfort to the declining life of her

only friend,—she became an actress. At that time we were quartered in Seville, to keep guard on the suspected Moriscos."

"Ah, the hated infidels!" muttered Calderon, fiercely, through his teeth.

"I saw Beatriz, and loved her at first sight. I do not say," added Fonseca, with a blush, "that my suit at the outset was that which alone was worthy of her; but her virtue soon won my esteem as well as love. I left Seville to seek my father and obtain his consent to a marriage with Beatriz. You know a hidalgo's prejudices,—they are insuperable. Meanwhile, the fame of the beauty and voice of the young actress reached Madrid, and hither she was removed from Seville by royal command. To Madrid, then, I hastened, on the pretence of demanding promotion. You, as you have stated, were absent in Portugal on some State mission. I sought the Duke de Lerma. I implored him to give me some post, anywhere—I recked not beneath what sky, in the vast empire of Spain—in which, removed from the prejudices of birth and of class, and provided with other means, less precarious than those that depend on the sword, I might make Beatriz my wife. The polished duke was more inexorable than the stern hidalgo. I flew to Beatriz; I told her I had nothing but my heart and right hand to offer. She wept, and she refused me."

"Because you were not rich?"

"Shame on you, no! but because she would not consent to mar my fortunes, and banish me from my native land. The next day I received a peremptory order to rejoin the army, and with that order came a brevet of promotion. Lover though I be, I am a Spaniard; to have disobeyed the order would have been dishonour. Hope dawned upon me,—I might rise, I might become rich. We exchanged our vows of fidelity. I returned to the camp. We corresponded. At last her letters alarmed me. Through all her reserve, I saw that she was revolted by her profession, and terrified at the persecutions to which it exposed her; the old woman, her sole guide and companion, was dying; she was dejected and un-

happy; she despaired of our union; she expressed a desire for the refuge of the cloister. At last came this letter, bidding me farewell forever. Her relation was dead; and, with the little money she had amassed, she had bought her entrance into the convent of St. Mary of the White Sword. Imagine my despair! I obtained leave of absence, I flew to Madrid. Beatriz is already immured in that dreary asylum; she has entered on her novitiate."

"Is that the letter you refer to?" said Calderon, extending his hand.

Fonseca gave him the letter.

Hard and cold as Calderon's character had grown, there was something in the tone of this letter—its pure and noble sentiments, its innocence, its affection—that touched some mystic chord in his heart. He sighed as he laid it down.

"You are, like all of us, Don Martin," said he, with a bitter smile, "the dupe of a woman's faith. But you must purchase experience for yourself; and if, indeed, you ask my services to procure you present bliss and future disappointment, those services are yours. It will not, I think, be difficult to interest the queen in your favour; leave me this letter,—it is one to touch the heart of a woman. If we succeed with the queen, who is the patroness of the convent, we may be sure to obtain an order from court for the liberation of the novice: the next step is one more arduous. It is not enough to restore Beatriz to freedom,—we must reconcile your family to the marriage. This cannot be done while she is not noble; but letters patent [here Calderon smiled] could ennable a mushroom itself—your humble servant is an example. Such letters may be bought or begged; I will undertake to procure them. Your father, too, may find a dowry accompanying the title, in the shape of a high and honourable post for yourself. You deserve much; you are beloved in the army; you have won a high name in the world. I take shame on myself that your fortunes have been overlooked. 'Out of sight out of mind;' alas! it is a true proverb. I confess that, when I beheld you in the anteroom, I blushed for my past forgetfulness. No matter,—I will repair my fault. Men say that

my patronage is misapplied; I will prove the contrary by your promotion."

"Generous Calderon!" said Fonseca, falteringly; "I ever hated the judgments of the vulgar. They calumniate you; it is from envy."

"No," said Calderon, coldly; "I am bad enough, but I am still human. Besides, gratitude is my policy. I have always found that it is a good way to get on in the world to serve those who serve us."

"But the duke?"

"Fear not; I have an oil that will smooth all the billows on that surface. As for the letter, I say, leave it with me; I will show it to the queen. Let me see you again to-morrow."



CHAPTER III.

A RIVAL.

CALDERON's eyes were fixed musingly on the door which closed on Fonseca's martial and noble form.

"Great contrasts among men!" said he, half aloud. "All the classes into which naturalists ever divided the animal world contain not the variety that exists between man and man. And yet we all agree in one object of our being,—all prey on each other! Glory, which is but the thirst of blood, makes yon soldier the tiger of his kind; other passions have made me the serpent: both fierce, relentless, unscrupulous,—both! hero and courtier, valour and craft! Hem! I will serve this young man,—he has served me. When all other affection was torn from me, he, then a boy, smiled on me and bade me love him. Why has he been so long forgotten? He is not of the race that I abhor,—no Moorish blood flows in his veins; neither is he of the great and powerful, whom I dread, nor of the crouching and the servile, whom I despise; he is one whom I can aid without a blush."

While Calderon thus soliloquized, the arras was lifted aside, and a cavalier, on whose cheek was the first down of manhood, entered the apartment.

"So, Roderigo, alone! welcome back to Madrid. Nay, seat thyself, man,—seat thyself."

Calderon bowed with the deepest reverence, and, placing a large *fauteuil* before the stranger, seated himself on a stool, at a little distance.

The new comer was of sallow complexion; his gorgeous dress sparkled with prodigal jewels. Boy as he was, there was yet a careless loftiness, a haughty ease, in the gesture,—the bend of the neck, the wave of the hand,—which, coupled with the almost servile homage of the arrogant favourite, would have convinced the most superficial observer that he was born of the highest rank. A second glance would have betrayed, in the full Austrian lip, the high but narrow forehead, the dark, voluptuous, but crafty and sinister eye, the features of the descendant of Charles V. It was the Infant of Spain that stood in the chamber of his ambitious minion.

"This is convenient, this private entrance into thy penetralia, Roderigo. It shelters me from the prying eyes of Uzeda, who ever seeks to cozen the sire by spying on the son. We will pay him off one of these days. He loves you no less than he does his prince."

"I bear no malice to him for that, your highness. He covets the smiles of the rising sun, and rails at the humble object which, he thinks, obstructs the beam."

"He might be easy on that score: I hate the man, and his cold formalities. He is ever fancying that we princes are intent on the affairs of State, and forgets that we are mortal, and that youth is the age for the bower, not the council. My precious Calderon, life would be dull without thee: how I rejoice at thy return, thou best inventor of pleasure that satiety ever prayed for! Nay, blush not: some men despise thee for thy talents; I do thee homage. By my great grandsire's beard, it will be a merry time at court when I am monarch, and thou minister!"

Calderon looked earnestly at the prince, but his scrutiny

did not serve to dispel a certain suspicion of the royal sincerity that ever and anon came across the favourite's most sanguine dreams. With all Philip's gayety, there was something restrained and latent in his ambiguous smile and his calm, deep, brilliant eye. Calderon, immeasurably above his lord in genius, was scarcely, perhaps, the equal of that beardless boy in hypocrisy and craft, in selfish coldness, in matured depravity.

"Well," resumed the prince, "I pay you not these compliments without an object. I have need of you,—great need; never did I so require your services as at this moment; never was there so great demand on your invention, your courage, your skill. Know, Calderon, I love!"

"My prince," said the marquis, smiling, "it is certainly not first love. How often has your highness—"

"No," interrupted the prince, hastily,— "no, I never loved till now. We never can love what we can easily win; but this, Calderon, *this* heart would be a conquest. Listen. I was at the convent chapel of St. Mary of the White Sword yesterday with the queen. Thou knowest that the abbess once was a lady of the chamber, and the queen loves her. Both of us were moved and astonished by the voice of one of the choir,— it was that of a novice. After the ceremony the queen made inquiries touching this new Santa Cecilia; and who dost thou think she is? No; thou wilt never guess! the once celebrated singer, the beautiful, the inimitable Beatriz Coello! Ah, you may well look surprised; when actresses turn nuns, it is well-nigh time for Calderon and Philip to turn monks. Now, you must know, Roderigo, that I, unworthy though I be, am the cause of this conversion. There is a certain Martin Fonseca, a kinsman of Lerma's— thou knowest him well. I learned, some time since, from the duke, that this young Orlando was most madly enamoured of a low-born girl,— nay, desired to wed her. The duke's story moved my curiosity. I found that it was the young Beatriz Coello, whom I had already admired on the stage. Ah, Calderon, she blazed and set during thy dull mission to Lisbon! I sought an opportunity to visit her. I was astonished at her

beauty, that seemed more dazzling in the chamber than on the stage. I pressed my suit — in vain. Calderon, hear you that? — in vain! Why wert thou not by? Thy arts never fail, my friend! She was living with an old relation, or *gouvernante*. The old relation died suddenly; I took advantage of her loneliness; I entered her house at night. By Saint Jago, her virtue baffled and defeated me. The next morning she was gone; nor could my researches discover her, until, at the convent of St. Mary, I recognized the lost actress in the young novice. She has fled to the convent to be true to Fonseca; she must fly from the convent to bless the prince. This is my tale: I want thy aid."

"Prince," said Calderon, gravely, "thou knowest the laws of Spain, the rigour of the Church. I dare not —"

"Pshaw. No scruples — my rank will bear thee harmless. Nay, look not so demure; why, even thou, see, hast thy Armida. This billet in a female hand — Heaven and earth, Calderon! What name is this? Beatriz Coello! Darest thou have crossed my path? Speak, sir! — speak!"

"Your highness," said Calderon, with a mixture of respect and dignity in his manner, — "your highness, hear me. My first benefactor, my beloved pupil, my earliest patron, was the same Don Martin Fonseca who seeks this girl with an honest love. This morning he has visited me, to implore my intercession on his behalf. Oh, Prince! turn not away; thou knowest not half his merit. Thou knowest not the value of such subjects, — men of the old iron race of Spain. Thou hast a noble and royal heart; be not the rival to the defender of thy crown. Bless this brave soldier, spare this poor orphan, — and one generous act of self-denial shall give thee absolution for a thousand pleasures."

"This from Roderigo Calderon!" said the prince, with a bitter sneer. "Man, know thy station and thy profession. When I want homilies, I seek my confessor; when I have resolved on a vice, I come to thee. A truce with this bombast. For Fonseca, he shall be consoled; and when he shall learn who is his rival, he is a traitor if he remain discontented with his lot. Thou shalt aid me, Calderon!"

"Your highness will pardon me — no!"

"Do I hear right? No! Art thou not my minion, my instrument? Can I not destroy as I have helped to raise thee? Thy fortunes have turned thy brain. The king already suspects and dislikes thee; thy foe, Uzeda, has his ear. The people execrate thee. If I abandon thee, thou art lost. Look to it!"

Calderon remained mute and erect, with his arms folded on his breast, and his cheek flushed with suppressed passions. Philip gazed at him earnestly, and then, muttering to himself, approached the favourite with an altered air.

"Come, Calderon, I have been hasty,—you maddened me; I meant not to wound you. Thou art honest, I think thou lovest me; and I will own that in ordinary circumstances thy advice would be good, and thy scruples laudable. But I tell thee that I adore this girl; that I have set all my hopes upon her; that at whatever cost, whatever risk, she must be mine. Wilt *thou* desert me? Wilt thou, on whose faith I have ever leaned so trustingly, forsake thy friend and thy prince for this brawling soldier? No; I wrong thee."

"Oh," said Calderon, with much semblance of emotion, "I would lay down my life in your service, and I have often surrendered my conscience to your lightest will! But this would be so base a perfidy in me! He has confided his life to my hands. How canst even thou count on my faith, if thou knowest me false to another?"

"False! art thou not false to me? Have I not confided to thee, and dost thou not desert me,—nay, perhaps, betray? How wouldst thou serve this Fonseca? How liberate the novice?"

"By an order of the court. Your royal mother —"

"Enough!" said the prince, fiercely; "do so. Thou shalt have leisure for repentance."

As he spoke, Philip strode to the door. Calderon, alarmed and anxious, sought to detain him; but the prince broke disdainfully away, and Calderon was again alone.

CHAPTER IV.

CIVIL AMBITION AND ECCLESIASTICAL.

SCARCELY had the prince vanished, before the door that led from the anteroom was opened, and an old man, in the ecclesiastical garb, entered the secretary's cabinet.

"Do I intrude, my son?" said the churchman.

"No, father, no; I never more desired your presence, your counsel. It is not often that I stand halting and irresolute between the two magnets of interest and conscience: this is one of those rare dilemmas."

Here Calderon rapidly narrated the substance of his conversation with Fonseca, and of the subsequent communication with the prince.

"You see," he said in conclusion, "how critical is my position. On one side, my obligations to Fonseca, my promise to a benefactor, a friend,—to the boy I assisted to rear. Nor is that all: the prince asks me to connive at the abstraction of a novice from a consecrated house. What peril! what hazard! On the other side, if I refuse, the displeasure, the vengeance of the prince, for whose favour I have already half forfeited that of the king; and who, were he once to frown upon me, would encourage all my enemies—in other phrase, the whole court—in one united attempt at my ruin."

"It is a stern trial," said the monk, gravely; "and one that may well excite your fear."

"Fear, Aliaga!—ha! ha! fear!" said Calderon, laughing scornfully. "Did true ambition ever know fear? Have we not the old Castilian proverb that tells us, 'He who has climbed the first step to power has left terror a thousand leagues behind'? No, it is not fear that renders me irresolute; it is wisdom, and some touch, some remnant, of human nature,—philosophers would call it virtue; you priests, religion."

"Son," said the priest, "when, as one of that sublime calling which enables us to place our unshodden feet upon the necks of kings, I felt that I had the power to serve and to exalt you; when, as confessor to Philip, I backed the patronage of Lerma, recommended you to the royal notice, and brought you into the sunshine of the royal favour, it was because I had read in your heart and brain those qualities of which the spiritual masters of the world ever seek to avail their cause. I knew thee brave, crafty, aspiring, unscrupulous. I knew that thou wouldest not shrink at the means that could secure to thee a noble end. Yea, when, years ago, in the valley of the Xenil, I saw thee bathe thy hands in the blood of thy foe, and heard thy laugh of exulting scorn; when I, alone master of thy secret, beheld thee afterwards flying from thy home stained with a second murder, but still calm, stern, and lord of thine own reason,— my knowledge of mankind told me, 'Of such men are high converts and mighty instruments made!'"

The priest paused; for Calderon heard him not. His cheek was livid, his eyes closed, his chest heaved wildly.

"Horrible remembrance!" he muttered; "fatal love! dread revenge! Inez, Inez, what hast thou to answer for!"

"Be soothed, my son; I meant not to tear the bandage from thy wounds."

"Who speaks?" cried Calderon, starting. "Ha, priest! priest! I thought I heard the Dead. Talk on, talk on: talk of the world, the Inquisition, thy plots, the torture, the rack! Talk of aught that will lead me back from the past."

"No; let me for a moment lead thee thither, in order to portray the future that awaits thee. When, at night, I found thee—the blood-stained fugitive—cowering beneath the shadow of the forest, dost thou remember that I laid my hand upon thine arm, and said to thee, 'Thy life is in my power'? From that hour, thy disdain of my threats, of myself, of thine own life,—all made me view thee as one born to advance our immortal cause. I led thee to safety far away; I won thy friendship and thy confidence. Thou becamest one of us,—one of the great Order of Jesus. Subse-

quently, I placed thee as the tutor to young Fonseca, then heir to great fortunes. The second marriage of his uncle, and the heir that by that marriage interposed between him and the honour of his house, rendered the probable alliance of the youth profitless to us. But thou hadst procured his friendship. He presented thee to the Duke of Lerma. I was just then appointed confessor to the king; I found that years had ripened thy genius, and memory had blunted in thee all the affections of the flesh. Above all, hating, as thou didst, the very name of the Moor, thou wert the man of men to aid in our great design of expelling the accursed race from the land of Spain. Enough—I served thee, and thou didst repay us. Thou hast washed out thy crime in the blood of the infidel,—thou art safe from detection. In Roderigo Calderon, Marquis de Siete Iglesias, who will suspect the Roderigo Nunez, the murderous student of Salamanca? Our device of the false father stifled even curiosity. Thou mayest wake to the future, nor tremble at one shadow in the past. The brightest hopes are before us both; but to realize them, we must continue the same path. We must never halt at an obstacle in our way. We must hold that to be no crime which advances our common objects. Mesh upon mesh we must entangle the future monarch in our web,—thou, by the nets of pleasure; I, by those of superstition. The day that sees Philip the Fourth upon the throne must be a day of jubilee for the Brotherhood and the Inquisition. When thou art prime minister, and I grand inquisitor,—that time must come,—we shall have the power to extend the sway of the sect of Loyola to the ends of the Christian world. The Inquisition itself our tool, posterity shall regard us as the apostles of intellectual faith. And thinkest thou that, for the attainment of these great ends, we can have the tender scruples of common men? Perish a thousand Fonsecas, ten thousand novices, ere thou lose, by the strength of a hair, thy hold over the senses and soul of the licentious Philip! At whatever hazard, save thy power; for with it are bound, as mariners to a plank, the hopes of those who make the mind a sceptre."

"Thy enthusiasm blinds and misleads thee, Aliaga," said

Calderon, coldly. "For me, I tell thee now, as I have told thee before, that I care not a rush for thy grand objects. Let mankind serve itself,—I look to myself alone. But fear not my faith; my interests and my very life are identified with thee and thy fellow-fanatics. If I desert thee, thou art too deep in my secrets not to undo me; and were I to slay thee, in order to silence thy testimony, I know enough of thy fraternity to know that I should but raise up a multitude of avengers. As for this matter, you give me wise, if not pious counsel. I will consider well of it. Adieu! The hour summons me to attend the king."

CHAPTER V.

THE TRUE FATA MOEGANA.

In the royal chamber, before a table covered with papers, sat the king and his secretary. Grave, sullen, and taciturn, there was little in the habitual manner of Philip the Third that could betray to the most experienced courtier the outward symptoms of favour or caprice. Education had fitted him for the cloister, but the necessities of despotism had added acute cunning to slavish superstition. The business for which Calderon had been summoned was despatched, with a silence broken but by monosyllables from the king, and brief explanations from the secretary; and Philip, rising, gave the signal for Calderon to retire. It was then that the king, turning a dull but steadfast eye upon the marquis, said, with a kind of effort, as if speech were painful to him,—

"The prince left me but a minute before your entrance; have you seen him since your return?"

"Your majesty, yes. He honoured me this morning with his presence."

"On State affairs?"

"Your majesty knows, I trust, that your servant treats of State affairs only with your august self, or your appointed ministers."

"The prince has favoured you, Don Roderigo."

"Your majesty commanded me to seek that favour."

"It is true. Happy the monarch whose faithful servant is the confidant of the heir to his crown!"

"Could the prince harbour one thought displeasing to your majesty, I think I could detect and quell it at its birth. But your majesty is blessed in a grateful son."

"I believe it. His love of pleasure decoys him from ambition — so it should be. I am not an austere parent. Keep his favour, Don Roderigo; it pleases me. Hast thou offended him in aught?"

"I trust I have not incurred so great a misfortune."

"He spoke not of thee with his usual praises — I noticed it. I tell thee this that thou mayest rectify what is wrong. Thou canst not serve me more than by guarding him from all friendships save with those whose affection to myself I can trust. I have said enough."

"Such has ever been my object. But I have not the youth of the prince, and men speak ill of me, that, in order to gain his confidence, I share in his pursuits."

"It matters not what they say of thee. Faithful ministers are rarely eulogized by the populace or the court. Thou knowest my mind: I repeat, lose not the prince's favour."

Calderon bowed low, and withdrew. As he passed through the apartments of the palace, he crossed a gallery, in which he perceived, stationed by a window, the young prince and his own arch-foe, the Duke d'Uzeda. At the same instant, from an opposite door, entered the Cardinal-Duke de Lerma; and the same unwelcome conjunction of hostile planets smote the eyes of that intriguing minister. Precisely because Uzeda was the duke's son was he the man in the world whom the duke most dreaded and suspected.

Whoever is acquainted with the Spanish comedy will not fail to have remarked the prodigality of intrigue and counter-intrigue upon which its interest is made to depend. In this,

the Spanish comedy was the faithful mirror of the Spanish life, especially in the circles of a court. Men lived in a perfect labyrinth of plot and counter-plot. The spirit of *finesse*, manœuvre, subtlety, and double-dealing pervaded every family. Not a house that was not divided against itself!

As Lerma turned his eyes from the unwelcome spectacle of such sudden familiarity between Uzeda and the heir-apparent,—a familiarity which it had been his chief care to guard against,—his glance fell on Calderon. He beckoned to him in silence, and retired, unobserved by the two confabulators, through the same door by which he had entered. Calderon took the hint, and followed him. The duke entered a small room, and carefully closed the door.

"How is this, Calderon?" he asked, but in a timid tone, for the weak old man stood in awe of his favourite. "Whence this new and most ill-boding league?"

"I know not, your eminence; remember that I am but just returned to Madrid: it amazes me no less than it does your eminence."

"Learn the cause of it, my good Calderon: the prince ever professed to hate Uzeda. Restore him to those feelings: thou art all in all with his highness! If Uzeda once gain his ear, thou art lost."

"Not so," cried Calderon, proudly. "My service is to the king; I have a right to his royal protection, for I have a claim on his royal gratitude."

"Do not deceive thyself," said the duke, in a whisper. "The king cannot live long: I have it from the best authority, his physician; nor is this all,—a formidable conspiracy against thee exists at court. But for myself and the king's confessor, Philip would consent to thy ruin. The strong hold thou hast over him is in thy influence with the Infant,—an influence which he knows to be exerted on behalf of his own fearful and jealous policy; that influence gone, neither I nor Aliaga could suffice to protect thee. Enough! Shut every access to Philip's heart against Uzeda."

Calderon bowed in silence, and the duke hastened to the royal cabinet.

"What a fool was I to think that I could still wear a conscience!" muttered Calderon, with a sneering lip; "but, Uzeda, I will baffle thee yet."

The next morning, the Marquis de Siete Iglesias presented himself at the levee of the prince of Spain.

Around the favourite, as his proud stature towered above the rest, flocked the obsequious grandees. The haughty smile was yet on his lip when the door opened and the prince entered. The crowd, in parting suddenly, left Calderon immediately in front of Philip; who, after gazing on him sternly for a moment, turned away, with marked courtesy, from the favourite's profound reverence, and began a low and smiling conversation with Gonzalez de Leon, one of Calderon's open foes.

The crowd exchanged looks of delight and surprise; and each of the nobles, before so wooing in their civilities to the minister, edged cautiously away.

His mortification had but begun. Presently Uzeda, hitherto almost a stranger to those apartments, appeared; the prince hastened to him, and in a few minutes the duke was seen following the prince into his private chamber. The sun of Calderon's favour seemed set. So thought the courtiers; not so the haughty favourite. There was even a smile of triumph on his lip, a sanguine flush upon his pale cheek, as he turned unheeding from the throng, and then entering his carriage, regained his home.

He had scarcely re-entered his cabinet, ere, faithful to his appointment, Fonseca was announced.

"What tidings, my best of friends?" exclaimed the soldier.

Calderon shook his head mournfully.

"My dear pupil," said he, in accents of well-affected sympathy, "there is no hope for thee. Forget this vain dream, —return to the army. I can promise thee promotion, rank, honours; but the hand of Beatriz is beyond my power."

"How?" said Fonseca, turning pale and sinking into a seat. "How is this? Why so sudden a change? Has the queen —"

"I have not seen her majesty; but the king is resolved

upon this matter: so are the Inquisition. The Church complains of recent and numerous examples of unholy and impolitic relaxation of her dread power. The court dare not interfere. The novice must be left to her own choice."

"And is there no hope?"

"None! Return to the excitement of thy brave career."

"Never!" cried Fonseca, with great vehemence. "If, in requital of all my services, of life risked, blood spilled, I cannot obtain a boon so easy to accord me, I renounce a service in which even fame has lost its charm. And hark you, Calderon, I tell you that I will *not* forego this pursuit. So fair, so innocent a victim shall not be condemned to that living tomb. Through the walls of the nunnery, through the spies of the Inquisition, love will find out its way; and in some distant land I will yet unite happiness and honour. I fear not exile; I fear not reverse; I no longer fear poverty itself. All lands, where the sound of the trumpet is not unknown, can afford career to the soldier, who asks from Heaven no other boon but his mistress and his sword."

"You will seek to abstract Beatriz, then?" said Calderon, calmly and musingly. "Yes, it may be your best course, if you take the requisite precautions. But can you see her; can you concert with her?"

"I think so. I trust I have already paved the way to an interview. Yesterday, after I quitted thee, I sought the convent; and as the chapel is one of the public sights of the city, I made my curiosity my excuse. Happily, I recognized in the porter of the convent an old servitor of my father's; he had known me from a child; he dislikes his calling, he will consent to accompany our flight, to share our fortunes; he has promised to convey a letter from me to Beatriz, and to transmit to me her answer."

"The stars smile on thee, Don Martin. When thou hast learned more, consult with me again. Now, I see a way to assist thee."

CHAPTER VI.

WEB UPON WEB.

THE next day, to the discomfiture of the courtiers, Calderon and the Infant of Spain were seen together, publicly, on the parade; and the secretary made one of the favoured few who attended the prince at the theatre. His favour was greater, his power more dazzling, than ever it had been known before. No cause for the breach and reconciliation being known, some attributed it to caprice, others to the wily design of the astute Calderon for the humiliation of Uzeda, who seemed only to have been admitted to one smile from the rising sun in order more signally to be reconsigned to the shade.

Meanwhile, Fonseca prospered almost beyond his hopes. Young, ardent, sanguine, the poor novice had fled from her quiet home and the indulgence of her free thoughts to the chill solitude of the cloister, little dreaming of the extent of the change. With a heart that overflowed with the warm thoughts of love and youth, the ghostlike shapes that flitted round her, the icy forms, the rigid ceremonials of that life which is but the mimicry of death, appalled and shocked her. That she had preserved against a royal and most perilous, because unscrupulous suitor, her fidelity to the absent Fonseca, was her sole consolation.

Another circumstance had combined with the loss of her protectress and the absence of Don Martin to sadden her heart and dispose her to the cloister. On the deathbed of the old woman, who had been to her as a mother, she had learned a secret hitherto concealed from her tender youth. Dark and tragic were the influences of the star which had shone upon her birth, gloomy the heritage of memories associated with her parentage. A letter, of which she now became the guardian and treasurer,—a letter in her mother's hand, woke tears more deep and bitter than she had ever



shed for herself. In that letter she read the strength and the fidelity, the sorrow and the gloom, of woman's love; and a dreary foreboding told her that the shadow of the mother's fate was cast over the child's. Such were the thoughts that made the cloister welcome till the desolation of the shelter was tried and known. But when, through the agency of the porter, Fonseca's letter reached her, all other feelings gave way to the burst of natural and passionate emotion. The absent had returned, again wooed, was still faithful. The awful vow was not spoken,—she might yet be his. She answered; she chided; she spoke of doubt, of peril, of fear for him, of maiden shame; but her affection coloured every word, and the letter was full of hope. The correspondence continued; the energetic remonstrances of Fonseca, the pure and fervent attachment of the novice, led more and more rapidly and surely to the inevitable result. Beatriz yielded to the prayer of her lover; she consented to the scheme of escape and flight that he proposed.

Late at evening Fonseca sought Calderon. The marquis was in the gardens of his splendid mansion.

The moonlight streamed over many a row of orange-trees and pomegranates, many a white and richly sculptured vase on its marble pedestal, many a fountain, that scattered its low music round the breathless air. Upon a terrace that commanded a stately view of the spires and palaces of Madrid stood Calderon, alone; beside him, one solitary and gigantic aloe cast its deep gloom of shade; and his motionless attitude, his folded arms, his face partially lifted to the starlit heavens, bespoke the earnestness and concentration of his thoughts.

"Why does this shudder come over me?" said he, half aloud. "It was thus in that dismal hour which preceded the knowledge of my shame,—the deed of a dark revenge, the revolution of my eventful and wondrous life! Ah, how happy was I once! a contented and tranquil student; a believer in those eyes that were to me as the stars to the astrologer. But the golden age passed into that of iron. And now," added Calderon, with a self-mocking sneer, "comes the era

which the poets have not chronicled; for fraud and hypocrisy and vice know no poets!"

The quick step of Fonseca interrupted the courtier's reverie. He turned, knit his brow, and sighed heavily, as if nerving himself to some effort; but his brow was smooth, and his aspect cheerful, ere Fonseca reached his side.

"Give me joy, give me joy, dear Calderon! She has consented. Now, then, your promised aid."

"You can depend upon the fidelity of your friendly porter?"

"With my life."

"A master key to the back-door of the chapel has been made?"

"See, I have it."

"And Beatriz can contrive to secrete herself in the confessional at the hour of the night prayers?"

"There is no doubt of her doing so with safety. The number of the novices is so great that one of them cannot well be missed."

"So much, then, for your part of the enterprise. Now for mine. You know that solitary house in the suburbs, on the high road to Fuencarral, which I pointed out to you yesterday? Well, the owner is a creature of mine. There horses shall be in waiting; there disguises shall be prepared. Beatriz must necessarily divest herself of the professional dress; you had better choose meaner garments for yourself. Drop those hidalgo titles of which your father is so proud, and pass off yourself and the novice as a notary and his wife, about to visit France on a lawsuit of inheritance. One of my secretaries shall provide you with a pass. Meanwhile, to-morrow, I shall be the first officially to hear of the flight of the novice, and I will set the pursuers on a wrong scent. Have I not arranged all things properly, my Fonseca?"

"You are our guardian angel!" cried Don Martin, fervently. "The prayers of Beatriz will be registered in your behalf above,—prayers that will reach the Great Throne as easily from the open valleys of France as in the gloomy cloisters of Madrid. At midnight to-morrow, then, we seek the house you have described to us."

"Ay, at midnight all shall be prepared."

With a light step and exulting heart, Fonseca turned from the palace of Calderon. Naturally sanguine and high-spirited, visions of hope and joy floated before his eyes, and the future seemed to him a land owning but the twin deities of Glory and Love.

He had reached about the centre of the street in which Calderon's abode was placed, when six men, who for some moments had been watching him from a little distance, approached.

"I believe," said the one who appeared the chief of the band, "that I have the honour to address Señor Don Martin Fonseca?"

"Such is my name."

"In the name of the king we arrest you. Follow us."

"Arrest! on what plea? What is my offence?"

"It is stated on this writ, signed by his Eminence the Cardinal-Duke de Lerma. You are charged with the crime of desertion."

"Thou liest, knave! I had the general's free permission to quit the camp."

"We have said all,—follow!"

Fonseca, naturally of the most impetuous and passionate character, was not in that moment in a mood to calculate coldly all the consequences of resistance. Arrest, imprisonment, on the eve before that which was to see him the deliverer of Beatriz, constituted a sentence of such despair, that all other considerations vanished before it. He set his teeth firmly, drew his sword, dashed aside the alguazil who attempted to obstruct his path, and strode grimly on, shaking one clenched hand in defiance, while with the other he waved the good Toledo that had often blazed in the van of battle, at the war-cry of "Saint Iago and Spain!"

The alguazils closed round the soldier, and the clash of swords was already heard, when suddenly torches borne on high threw their glare across the moonlit street, and two running footmen called out, "Make way for the most noble the Marquis de Siete Iglesias!" At that name, Fonseca dropped

the point of his weapon; the alguazils themselves drew aside; and the tall figure and pale countenance of Calderon were visible amongst the group.

"What means this brawl in the open streets at this late hour?" said the minister, sternly.

"Calderon!" exclaimed Fonseca; "this is indeed fortunate! These caitiffs have dared to lay hands on a soldier of Spain, and to forge for their villany the name of his own kinsman, the Duke de Lerma."

"Your charge against this gentleman?" asked Calderon, calmly, turning to the principal alguazil, who placed the writ of arrest in the secretary's hand. Calderon read it leisurely, and raised his hat as he returned it to the alguazil; he then drew aside Fonseca.

"Are you mad?" said he, in a whisper. "Do you think you can resist the law? Had I not arrived so opportunely you would have converted a slight accusation into a capital offence. Go with these men: do not fear; I will see the duke, and obtain your immediate release. To-morrow I will visit and accompany you home."

Fonseca, still half beside himself with rage, would have replied, but Calderon significantly placed his finger on his lip, and turned to the alguazils.

"There is a mistake here: it will be rectified to-morrow. Treat this cavalier with all the respect and worship due to his birth and merits. Go, Don Martin, go," he added, in a lower voice; "go, unless you desire to lose Beatriz forever. Nothing but obedience can save you from the imprisonment of half a life!"

Awed and subdued by this threat, Fonseca, in gloomy silence, placed his sword in its sheath, and sullenly followed the alguazils. Calderon watched them depart with a thoughtful and absent look; then, starting from his reverie, he bade his torchbearers proceed, and resumed his way to the Prince of Spain.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OPEN COUNTENANCE, THE CONCEALED THOUGHTS.

THE next day, at noon, Calderon visited Fonseca in his place of confinement. The young man was seated by a window that overlooked a large dull courtyard, with a neglected and broken fountain in the centre, leaning his cheek upon his hand. His long hair was dishevelled, his dress disordered, and a gloomy frown darkened features naturally open and ingenuous. He started to his feet as Calderon approached.

"My release — you have brought my release — let us forth!"

"My dear pupil, be ruled, be calm. I have seen the duke; the cause of your imprisonment is as I suspected. Some imprudent words, overheard, perhaps, but by your valet, have escaped you,— words intimating your resolution not to abandon Beatriz. You know your kinsman, a man of doubts and fears, of forms, ceremonies, and scruples. From very affection for his kindred and yourself he has contrived your arrest; all my expostulations have been in vain. I fear your imprisonment may continue, either until you give a solemn promise to renounce all endeavour to dissuade Beatriz from the final vows, or until she herself has pronounced them."

Fonseca, as if stupefied, stared a moment at Calderon, and then burst into a wild laugh. Calderon continued,—

"Nevertheless, do not despair. Be patient; I am ever about the duke; nay, I have the courage, in your cause, to appeal even to the king himself."

"And to-night she expects me,— to-night she was to be free!"

"We can convey the intelligence of your mischance to her: the porter will befriend you."

"Away, false friend, or powerless protector, that you are! Are your promises of aid come to this? But I care not; my

case, my wrongs, shall be laid before the king; I will inquire if it be thus that Philip the Third treats the defenders of his crown. Don Roderigo Calderon, will you place my memorial in the hands of your royal master? Do this, and I will thank you."

"No, Fonseca, I will not ruin you; the king would pass your memorial to the Duke de Lerma. Tush! this is not the way that men of sense deal with misfortune. Think you I should be what I now am, if in every reverse I had raved, and not reflected? Sit down, and let us think of what can now be done."

"Nothing, unless the prison door open by sunset."

"Stay, a thought strikes me. The term of your imprisonment ceases when you relinquish the hope of Beatriz. But what if the duke could believe that Beatriz relinquished *you*? What, for instance, if she fled from the convent as you proposed, and we could persuade the duke that it was with another?"

"Ah, be silent!"

"Nay, what advantages in this scheme! what safety! If she fly alone, or, as supposed, with another lover, the duke will have no interest in pursuit, in punishment. She is not of that birth that the State will take the trouble very actively to interfere; she may reach France in safety,—ay, a thousand times more safely than if she fled with you, a hidalgo and a man of rank, whom the State would have an interest to reclaim, and to whom the Inquisition, hating the nobles, would impute the crime of sacrilege. It is an excellent thought! Your imprisonment may be the salvation of you both; your plan may succeed still better without your intervention; and after a few days, the duke, believing that your resentment must necessarily replace your love, will order your release; you can join Beatriz on the frontier, and escape with her to France."

"But," said Fonseca, struck, but not convinced, by the suggestion of Calderon, "who will take my place with Beatriz; who penetrate into the gardens; who bear her from the convent?"

"That, for your sake, will I do. Perhaps," added Calderon, smiling, "a courtier may manage such an intrigue with even more dexterity than a soldier. I will bear her to the house we spoke of; there I know she can lie hid in safety, till the languid pursuit of uninterested officials shall cease; and thence I can easily find means to transport her, under safe and honourable escort, to any place it may please you to appoint."

"And think you Beatriz will fly with you, a stranger? Impossible! Your plan pleases me not."

"Nor does it please me," said Calderon, coldly; "the risks I proposed to run are too imminent to be contemplated complacently: I thank you for releasing me from my offer; nor should I have made it, Fonseca, but from this fear,—what if to-morrow the duke himself (he is a churchman, remember) see the novice; what if he terrify her with threats against yourself; what if he induce the abbess and the Church to abridge the novitiate; what if Beatriz be compelled or awed into taking the veil; what if you be released even next week and find her lost to you forever?"

"They cannot,—they dare not!"

"The duke dares all things for ambition; your alliance with Beatriz he would hold a disgrace to his house. Think not my warnings are without foundation,—I speak from authority; such is the course the Duke de Lerma *has* resolved upon. Nothing else could have induced me to offer to brave for your sake all the hazard of outraging the law and braving the terrors of the Inquisition. But let us think of some other plan. Is your escape possible? I fear not. No; you must trust to my chance of persuading the duke into prosecuting the matter no further; trust to some mightier scheme engrossing all his thoughts,—to a fit of good-humour after his siesta, or perhaps an attack of the gout or a stroke of apoplexy. Such, after all, are the chances of human felicity, the pivots on which turns the solemn wheel of human life."

Fonseca made no reply for some moments; he traversed the room with hasty and disordered strides, and at last stopped abruptly.

"Calderon, there is no option; I must throw myself on your generosity, your faith, your friendship. I will write to Beatriz; I will tell her, for my sake, to confide in you."

As he spoke, Don Martin turned to the table, and wrote a hasty and impassioned note, in which he implored the novice to trust herself to the directions of Don Roderigo Calderon, his best, his only friend; and as he placed this letter in the hands of the courtier, he turned aside to conceal his emotions. Calderon himself was deeply moved: his cheek was flushed, and his hand seemed tremulous as it took the letter.

"Remember," said Fonseca, "that I trust to you my life of life. As you are true to me, may Heaven be merciful to you!"

Calderon made no answer, but turned to the door.

"Stay," said Fonseca; "I had forgot this,—here is the master key."

"True; how dull I was! And the porter—will he attend to thy proxy?"

"Doubt it not. Accost him with the word, 'Grenada.' But he expects to share the flight."

"That can be arranged. To-morrow you will hear of my success. Farewell!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

It was midnight in the chapel of the convent.

The moonlight shone with exceeding lustre through the tall casements, and lit into a ghastly semblance of life the marble images of saint and martyr, that threw their long shadows over the consecrated floor. Nothing could well be conceived more dreary, solemn, and sepulchral than that holy place: its distained and time-hallowed walls; the impenetrable mass of darkness that gathered into those recesses which the moonlight failed to reach; its antique and massive tombs,

above which reclined the sculptured effigies of some departed patroness or abbess, who had exchanged a living grave for the Mansions of the Blest. But there — oh, wonderful human heart! — even there, in that spot, the very homily and warning against earthly affections and mortal hopes — even there, couldst thou beat with as wild, as bright, and as pure a passion as ever heaved the breast and shone in the eyes of Beauty, in the free air that ripples the Guadiana, or amidst the twilight dance of Castilian maids.

A tall figure, wrapped from head to foot in a cloak, passed slowly up the aisle; but light and cautious though the foot-step, it woke a low, hollow, ominous echo, that seemed more than the step itself to disturb the sanctity of the place. It paused opposite to a confessional, which was but dimly visible through the shadows around it; and then there emerged timidly a female form; and a soft voice whispered, "It is thou, Fonseca?"

"Hist!" was the answer; "he waits without. Be quick; speak not, come."

Beatriz recoiled in surprise and alarm at the voice of a stranger; but the man, seizing her by the hand, drew her hastily from the chapel, and hurried her across the garden, through a small postern door, which stood ajar, into an obscure street bordering the convent wall. Here stood the expectant porter, with a bundle in his hand, which he opened, and took thence a long cloak, such as the women of middling rank in Madrid wore in the winter season, with the customary mantilla or veil. With these, still without speaking, the stranger hastily shrouded the form of the novice, and once more hurried her on till about a hundred yards from the garden gate he came to a carriage, into which he lifted Beatriz, whispered a few words to the porter, seated himself by the side of the novice, and the vehicle drove rapidly away.

It was some moments before Beatriz could sufficiently recover from her first agitation and terror, to feel alive to all the strangeness of her situation. She was alone with a stranger; where was Fonseca? She turned towards her companion.

"Who art thou?" she said; "whither art thou leading me, and why — "

"Why is not Don Martin by thy side? Pardon me, señora: I have a billet for thee from Fonseca; in a few minutes thou wilt know all."

At this time the vehicle came suddenly in the midst of a train of footmen and equipages that choked up the way. There was a brilliant entertainment at the French embassy, and thither flocked all the rank and chivalry of Madrid. Calderon drew down the blinds and hastily enjoined silence on Beatriz. It was some minutes before the driver extricated himself from the throng; and then, as if to make amends for the delay, he put his horses to their full speed, and carefully selected the most obscure and solitary thoroughfares. At length the carriage entered the range of suburbs which still at this day the traveller passes on his road from Madrid to France. The horses stopped before a lonely house that stood a little apart from the road, and which from the fashion of its architecture appeared of considerable antiquity. The stranger descended and knocked twice at the door; it was opened by an old man, whose exaggerated features, bended frame, and long beard proclaimed him of the race of Israel. After a short and whispered parley, the stranger returned to Beatriz, gravely assisted her from the carriage, and, leading her across the threshold and up a flight of rude stairs, dimly lighted, entered a chamber richly furnished. The walls were hung with stuffs of gorgeous colouring and elaborate design. Pedestals of the whitest marble placed at each corner of the room supported candelabra of silver. The sofas and couches were of the heavy but sumptuous fashion which then prevailed in the palaces of France and Spain; and of which Venice (the true model of the barbaric decorations with which Louis the Fourteenth corrupted the taste of Paris) was probably the original inventor. In an alcove, beneath a silken canopy, was prepared a table, laden with wines, fruits, and viands; and altogether the elegance and luxury that characterized the apartment were in strong and strange contrast with the half-ruined exterior of the abode, the

gloomy and rude approach to the chamber, and the mean and servile aspect of the Jew, who stood, or rather cowered by the door, as if waiting for further orders. With a wave of the hand the stranger dismissed the Israelite; and then, approaching Beatriz, presented to her Fonseca's letter.

As with an enchanting mixture of modesty and eagerness Beatriz, half averting her face, bent over the well-known characters, Calderon gazed upon her with a scrutinizing and curious eye.

The courtier was not, in this instance, altogether the villain that from outward appearances the reader may have deemed him. His plan was this: he had resolved on compliance with the wishes of the prince — his safety rested on that compliance. But Fonseca was not to be sacrificed without reserve. Profoundly despising womankind, and firmly persuaded of their constitutional treachery and deceit, Calderon could not believe the actress that angel of light and purity which she seemed to the enamoured Fonseca. He had resolved to subject her to the ordeal of the prince's addresses. If she fell, should he not save his friend from being the dupe of an artful *intriguante*; should he not deserve the thanks of Don Martin for the very temptation to which Beatriz was now to be submitted? If he could convince Fonseca of her falsehood, he should stand acquitted to his friend, while he should have secured his interest with the prince. But if, on the other hand, Beatriz came spotless through the trial; if the prince, stung by her obstinate virtue, should menace to sink courtship into violence, Calderon knew that it would not be in the first or second interview that the novice would have any real danger to apprehend; and he should have leisure to concert her escape by such means as would completely conceal from the prince his own connivance at her flight. Such was the compromise that Calderon had effected between his conscience and his ambition. But while he gazed upon the novice, though her features were turned from him, and half veiled by the head-dress she had assumed, strange feelings, ominous and startling, like those remembrances of the Past which sometimes come in the guise of prophecies of the Future,

thronged, indistinct and dim, upon his breast. The unconscious and exquisite grace of her form, its touching youth, an air of innocence diffused around it, a something helpless and pleading to man's protection in the very slightness of her beautiful but fairy-like proportions, seemed to reproach his treachery, and to awaken whatever of pity or human softness remained in his heart.

The novice had read the letter; and turning, in the impulse of surprise and alarm, to Calderon for explanation, for the first time she remarked his features and his aspect; for he had then laid aside his cloak, and the broad Spanish hat with its heavy plume. It was thus that their eyes met, and, as they did so, Beatriz, starting from her seat, uttered a wild cry.

"And thy name is Calderon,—Don Roderigo Calderon? Is it possible? Hadst thou never another name?" she exclaimed; and, as she spoke, she approached him slowly and fearfully.

"Lady, Calderon is my name," replied the marquis; but his voice faltered. "But thine—thine—is it, in truth, Beatriz Coello?"

Beatriz made no reply, but continued to advance, till her very breath came upon his cheek; she then laid her hand upon his arm, and looked up into his face with a gaze so earnest, so intent, so prolonged, that Calderon, but for a strange and terrible thought—half of wonder, half of suspicion, which had gradually crept into his soul, and now usurped it—might have doubted whether the reason of the poor novice was not unsettled.

Slowly Beatriz withdrew her eyes, and they fell upon a large mirror opposite, which reflected in full light the features of Calderon and herself. It was then—her natural bloom having faded into a paleness scarcely less statue-like than that which characterized the cheek of Calderon himself, and all the sweet play and mobility of feature that belong to first youth being replaced by a rigid and marble stillness of expression,—it was then that a remarkable resemblance between these two persons became visible and startling. That

resemblance struck alike, and in the same instant, both Beatriz and Calderon; and both, gazing on the mirror, uttered an involuntary and simultaneous exclamation.

With a trembling and hasty hand the novice searched amidst the folds of her robe, and drew forth a small leathern case closed with clasps of silver. She touched the spring, and took out a miniature, upon which she cast a rapid and wild glance; then, lifting her eyes to Calderon, she cried, "It must be so! it is, it is my father!" and fell motionless at his feet.

Calderon did not for some moments heed the condition of the novice: that chamber, the meditated victim, the present time, the coming evil,—all were swept away from his soul; he was transported back into the past, with the two dread Spirits, Memory and Conscience. His knees knocked together, his aspect was livid, the cold drops stood upon his brow; he muttered incoherently, and then bent down and took up the picture. It was the face of a man in the plain garb of a Salamanca student, and in the first flush of youth; the noble brow, serene and calm, and stamped alike with candour and courage; the smooth cheek, rich with the hues of health; the lips, parting in a happy smile, and eloquent of joy and hope,—it was the face of that wily, grasping, ambitious, unscrupulous man, when life had yet brought no sin; it was as if the ghost of youth were come back to accuse the crimes of manhood! The miniature fell from his hand; he groaned aloud. Then gazing on the prostrate form of the novice, he said, "Poor wretch! can I believe that thou art indeed of mine own race and blood; or rather, does not nature, that stamped these lineaments on thy countenance, deceive and mock me? If she, thy mother, lied, why not nature herself?"

He raised the novice in his arms, and gazed long and wistfully upon her lifeless but most lovely features. She moved not,—she scarcely seemed to breathe; yet he fancied he felt her embrace tightening round him, he fancied he heard again the voice that had hailed him "**FATHER!**" His heart beat aloud; the divine instinct overpowered all things, he pressed a passionate kiss upon her forehead, and his tears fell fast

and warm upon her cheek. But again the dark remembrance crossed him, and he shuddered, placed the novice hastily on one of the couches, and shouted aloud.

The Jew appeared, and was ordered to summon Jacinta. A young woman of the same persuasion, and of harsh and forbidding exterior, entered, and to her care Calderon briefly consigned the yet insensible Beatriz.

While Jacinta unlaced the dress and chafed the temples of the novice, Calderon seemed buried in gloomy thought. At last he strode slowly away, as if to quit the chamber, when his foot struck against the case of the picture, and his eye rested upon a paper which lay therein, folded and embedded. He took it up, and, lifting aside the hangings, hurried into a small cabinet lighted by a single lamp. Here, alone and unseen, Calderon read the following letter:—

TO RODERIGO NUNEZ.

Will this letter ever meet thine eyes? I know not; but it is comfort to write to thee on the bed of death; and were it not for that horrible and haunting thought that thou believest me — me, whose very life was in thy love — faithless and dishonoured, even death itself would be the sweeter because it comes from the loss of thee. Yes, something tells me that these lines will not be written in vain; that thou wilt read them yet, when this hand is still and this brain at rest, and that then thou wilt feel that I could not have dared to write to thee if I were not innocent; that in every word thou wilt recognize the evidence that is strong as the voice of thousands, — the simple but solemn evidence of faith and truth. What! when for thee I deserted all, — home, and a father's love, wealth, and the name I had inherited from Moors who had been monarchs in their day, — couldst thou think that I had not made the love of thee the core and life and principle of my very being! And one short year — could that suffice to shake my faith? — one year of marriage, but two months of absence! You left me, left that dear home, by the silver Xenil. For love did not suffice to you; ambition began to stir within you, and you called it "love." You said, it grieved you that I was poor; that you could not restore to me the luxury and wealth I had lost. Alas! why did you turn so incredulously from my assurance that in you, and you alone, were centred my ambition and pride? You declared that the vain readers of the stars had

foretold at your cradle that you were predestined to lofty honours and dazzling power, and that the prophecy would work out its own fulfilment. You left me to seek in Madrid your relation who had risen into the favour of a minister, and from whose love you expected to gain an opening to your career. Do you remember how we parted,—how you kissed away my tears, and how they gushed forth again; how again and again you said, “Farewell!” and again and again returned as if we could never part? And I took my babe, but a few weeks born, from her cradle, and placed her in thy arms, and bade thee see that she had already learned thy smile; and were these the signs of falsehood? Oh, how I pined for the sound of thy footstep when thou wert gone! how all the summer had vanished from the landscape; and how, turning to thy child, I fancied I again beheld thee! The day after thou hadst left me there was a knock at the door of the cottage; the nurse opened it, and there entered your former rival, whom my father had sought to force upon me, the richest of the descendants of the Moor, Arraez Ferrares. Why linger on this hateful subject? He had tracked us to our home, he had learned thy absence, he came to insult me with his vows. By the Blessed Mother, whom thou hast taught me to adore, by the terror and pang of death, by my hopes of heaven, I am innocent, Roderigo, I am innocent! Oh, how couldst thou be so deceived? He quitted the cottage, discomfited and enraged; again he sought me, and again and again; and when the door was closed upon him, he waylaid my steps. Lone and defenceless as we were, thy wife and child, with but one attendant, I feared him not; but I trembled at thy return, for I knew that thou wert a Spaniard, a Castilian, and that beneath thy calm and gentle seeming lurked pride and jealousy and revenge. Thy letter came, the only letter since thy absence, the last letter from thee I may ever weep over, and lay upon my heart. Thy relation was dead, and his wealth enriched a nearer heir. Thou wert to return. The day in which I might expect thee approached,—it arrived. During the last week I had seen and heard no more of Ferrares. I trusted that he had at length discovered the vanity of his pursuit. I walked into the valley, thy child in my arms, to meet thee; but thou didst not come. The sun set, and the light of thine eyes replaced not the declining day. I returned home, and watched for thee all night, but in vain. The next morning again I went forth into the valley, and again, with a sick heart, returned to my desolate home. It was then noon. As I approached the door I perceived Ferrares. He forced his entrance. I told him of thy expected return, and threatened him with thy resentment. He left me; and, terrified with a thousand

vague forebodings, I sat down to weep. The nurse, Leonarda, was watching by the cradle of our child in the inner room. I was alone. Suddenly the door opened. I heard thy step; I knew it; I knew its music. I started up. Saints of Heaven! what a meeting! what a return! Pale, haggard, thine hands and garments dripping blood, thine eyes blazing with insane fire, a terrible smile of mockery on thy lip, thou stoodst before me. I would have thrown myself on thy breast; thou didst cast me from thee; I fell on my knees, and thy blade was pointed at my heart,—the heart so full of thee! “He is dead,” didst thou say, in a hollow voice; “he is dead—thy paramour—take thy bed beside him!” I know not what I said, but it seemed to move thee; thy hand trembled, and the point of thy weapon dropped. It was then that, hearing thy voice, Leonarda hastened into the room, and bore in her arms thy child. “See,” I exclaimed, “see thy daughter; see, she stretches her hands to thee,—she pleads for her mother!” At that sight thy brow became dark, the demon seized upon thee again. “Mine!” were thy cruel words—they ring in my ear still.—“no! she was born before the time—ha! ha!—thou didst betray me from the first!” With that thou didst raise thy sword; but even then (ah, blessed thought! even then) remorse and love palsied thy hand, and averted thy gaze: the blow was not that of death. I fell senseless to the ground, and when I recovered thou wert gone. Delirium succeeded; and when once more my senses and reason returned to me, I found by my side a holy priest, and from him, gradually, I learned all that till then was dark. Ferrares had been found in the valley, weltering in his blood. borne to a neighbouring monastery, he lingered a few days, to confess the treachery he had practised on thee; to adopt, in his last hours, the Christian faith; and to attest his crime with his own signature. He enjoined the monk, who had converted and confessed him, to place this proof of my innocence in my hands. Behold it enclosed within. If this letter ever reach thee, thou wilt learn how thy wife was true to thee in life, and has therefore the right to bless thee in death.

At this passage, Calderon dropped the letter, and was seized with a kind of paralysis, which for some moments seemed to deprive him of life itself. When he recovered he eagerly grasped a scroll that was inclosed in the letter, but which, hitherto, he had disregarded. Even then, so strong were his emotions, that sight itself was obscured and dimmed, and it was long before he could read the characters, which were already discoloured by time.

TO INEZ.

I have but a few hours to live,—let me spend them in atonement and in prayer, less for myself than thee. Thou knowest not how madly I adored thee; and how thy hatred or indifference stung every passion into torture. Let this pass. When I saw thee again,—the forsaker of thy faith, poor, obscure, and doomed to a peasant's lot,—daring hopes shaped themselves into fierce resolves. Finding that thou wert inexorable, I turned my arts upon thy husband. I knew his poverty and his ambition: we Moors have had ample knowledge of the avarice of the Christians! I bade one whom I could trust to seek him out at Madrid. Wealth—lavish wealth—wealth that could open to a Spaniard all the gates of power was offered to him if he would renounce thee forever. Nay, in order to crush out all love from his breast, it was told him that mine was the prior right,—that thou hadst yielded to my suit ere thou didst fly with him; that thou didst use his love as an escape from thine own dishonour; that thy very child owned another father. I had learned, and I availed myself of the knowledge, that it was born before its time. We had miscalculated the effect of this representation, backed and supported by forged letters; instead of abandoning thee, he thought only of revenge for his shame. As I left thy house, the last time I gazed upon thine indignant eyes, I found the avenger on my path! He had seen me quit thy roof,—he needed no other confirmation of the tale. I fell into the pit which I had digged for thee. Conscience unnerved my hand and blunted my sword; our blades scarcely crossed before his weapon stretched me on the ground. They tell me he has fled from the anger of the law; let him return without a fear. Solemnly, and from the bed of death, and in the sight of the last tribunal, I proclaim to justice and the world that we fought fairly, and I perish justly. I have adopted thy faith, though I cannot comprehend its mysteries. It is enough that it holds out to me the only hope that we shall meet again. I direct these lines to be transmitted to thee,—an eternal proof of thy innocence and my guilt. Ah, canst thou forgive me? I knew no sin till I knew thee.

ARRAEZ FERRARES.

Calderon paused ere he turned to the concluding lines of his wife's letter; and, though he remained motionless and speechless, never were agony and despair stamped more terribly on the face of man.

CONCLUSION OF THE LETTER OF INEZ.

And what avails to me this testimony of my faith ? Thou art fled ; they cannot track thy footsteps ; I shall see thee no more on earth. I am dying fast, but not of the wound I took from thee ; let not that thought darken thy soul, my husband ! No, that wound is healed. Thought is sharper than the sword. I have pined away for the loss of thee and thy love ! Can the shadow live without the sun ? And wilt thou never place thy hands on my daughter's head, and bless her for her mother's sake ? Ah, yes, yes ! The saints that watch over our human destinies will one day cast her in thy way : and the same hour that gives thee a daughter shall redeem and hallow the memory of a wife. . . . Leonarda has vowed to be a mother to our child ; to tend her, work for her, rear her, though in poverty, to virtue. I consign these letters to Leonarda's charge, with thy picture, — never to be removed from my breast till the heart within has ceased to beat. Not till Beatriz (I have so baptized her — it was thy mother's name !) has attained to the age when reason can wrestle with the knowledge of sorrow, shall her years be shadowed with the knowledge of our fate. Leonarda has persuaded me that Beatriz shall not take thy name of Nunex. Our tale has excited horror — for it is not understood — and thou art called the murderer of thy wife ; and the story of our misfortunes would cling to our daughter's life, and reach her ears, and perhaps mar her fate. But I know that thou wilt discover her not the less, for Nature has a Providence of its own. When at last you meet her, protect, guard, love her, — sacred to you as she is, and shall be, the pure but mournful legacy of love and death. I have done : I die blessing thee !

INEZ.

Scarce had he finished those last words, ere the clock struck : it was the hour in which the prince was to arrive. The thought restored Calderon to the sense of the present time, — the approaching peril. All the cold calculations he had formed for the stranger-novice vanished now. He kissed the letter passionately, placed it in his breast, and hurried into the chamber where he had left his child. Our tale returns to Fonseca.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COUNTERPLOT.

CALDERON had not long left the young soldier before the governor of the prison entered to pay his respects to a captive of such high birth and military reputation.

Fonseca, always blunt and impatient of mood, was not in a humour to receive and return compliments; but the governor had scarcely seated himself ere he struck a chord in the conversation which immediately arrested the attention and engaged the interest of the prisoner.

"Do not fear, sir," said he, "that you will be long detained; the power of your enemy is great, but it will not be of duration. The storm is already gathering round him; he must be more than man if he escape the thunderbolt."

"Do you speak to me thus of my own kinsman, the Cardinal-Duke de Lerma?"

"No, Don Martin, pardon me. I spoke of the Marquis de Siete Iglesias. Are you so great a stranger to Madrid and to the court as to suppose that the Cardinal de Lerma ever signs a paper but at the instance of Don Roderigo? Nay, that he ever looks over the paper to which he sets his hand? Depend upon it, you are here to gratify the avarice or revenge of the Scourge of Spain."

"Impossible!" cried Fonseca. "Don Roderigo is my friend, my intercessor. He overwhelms me with his kindness."

"Then you are indeed lost," said the governor, in accents of compassion; "the tiger always caresses his prey before he devours it. What have you done to provoke his kindness?"

"Señor," said Fonseca, suspiciously, "you speak with a strange want of caution to a stranger, and against a man whose power you confess."

"Because I am safe from his revenge; because the Inquisition have already fixed their fatal eyes upon him; because by that Inquisition I am not unknown nor unprotected; because I see with joy and triumph the hour approaching that must render up to justice the pander of the prince, the betrayer of the king, the robber of the people; because I have an interest in thee, Don Martin, of which thou wilt be aware when thou hast learned my name. I am Juan de la Nuza, the father of the young officer whose life you saved in the assault of the Moriscos, in Valentia, and I owe you an everlasting gratitude."

There was something in the frank and hearty tone of the governor which at once won Fonseca's confidence. He became agitated and distracted with suspicions of his former tutor and present patron.

"What, I ask, hast thou done to attract his notice? Calderon is not capricious in cruelty. Art thou rich, and does he hope that thou wilt purchase freedom with five thousand pistoles? No! Hast thou crossed the path of his ambition? Hast thou been seen with Uzeda? Or art thou in favour with the prince? No, again! Then hast thou some wife, some sister, some mistress, of rare accomplishments and beauty, with whom Calderon would gorge the fancy and retain the esteem of the profligate Infant? Ah, thou changest colour."

"By Heaven! you madden me with these devilish surmises. Speak plainly."

"I see thou knowest not Calderon," said the governor, with a bitter smile. "I do,—for my niece was beautiful, and the prince wooed her— But enough of that: at his scaffold, or at the rack, I shall be avenged on Roderigo Calderon. You said the cardinal was your kinsman; you are, then, equally related to his son, the Duke d'Uzeda. Apply not to Lerma; he is the tool of Calderon. Apply yourself to Uzeda; he is Calderon's mortal foe. While Calderon gains ground with the prince, Uzeda advances with the king. Uzeda by a word can procure thy release. The duke knows and trusts me. Shall I be commissioned to acquaint him with thy arrest, and entreat his intercession with Philip?"

"You give me new life! But not an hour is to be lost; this night — this day — oh, Mother of Mercy! what image have you conjured up! fly to Uzeda, if you would save my very reason. I myself have scarcely seen him since my boyhood,— Lerma forbade me seek his friendship. But I am of his race,— his blood."

"Be cheered,— I shall see the duke to-day. I have business with him where you wot not. We are bringing strange events to a crisis. Hope the best."

With this the governor took his leave.

At the dusk of the evening, Don Juan de la Nuza, wrapped in a dark mantle, stood before a small door deep-set in a massive and gloomy wall, that stretched along one side of a shunned and deserted street. Without sign of living hand the door opened at his knock, and the governor entered a long and narrow passage that conducted to chambers more associated with images of awe than any in his own prison. Here he suddenly encountered the Jesuit, Fray Louis d'Aliaga, confessor to the king.

"How fares the Grand Inquisitor?" asked De la Nuza.

"He has just breathed his last," answered the Jesuit. "His illness — so sudden — defied all aid. Sandoval y Roxas is with the saints."

The governor, who was, as the reader may suppose, one of the sacred body, crossed himself, and answered: "With whom will rest the appointment of the successor? Who will be first to gain the ear of the king?"

"I know not," replied the Jesuit; "but I am at this instant summoned to Uzeda. Pardon my haste."

So saying, Aliaga glided away.

"With Sandoval y Roxas," muttered Don Juan, "dies the last protector of Calderon and Lerma: unless, indeed, the wily marquis can persuade the king to make Aliaga, his friend, the late cardinal's successor. But Aliaga seeks Uzeda,— Uzeda his foe and rival. What can this portend?"

Thus soliloquizing, the governor silently continued his way till he came to a door by which stood two men, masked, who

saluted him with a mute inclination of the head. The door opened and again closed, as the governor entered.

Meanwhile, the confessor had gained the palace of the Duke d'Uzeda. Uzeda was not alone: with him was a man whose sallow complexion, ill-favoured features, and simple dress strangely contrasted the showy person and sumptuous habiliments of the duke. But the instant this personage opened his lips the comparison was no longer to his prejudice. Something in the sparkle of his deep-set eye, in the singular enchantment of his smile, and above all, in the tone of a very musical and earnest voice, chained attention at once to his words. And, whatever those words, there was about the man, and his mode of thought and expression, the stamp of a mind at once crafty and commanding. This personage was Gaspar de Guzman, then but a gentleman of the prince's chamber (which post he owed to Calderon, whose creature he was supposed to be), afterwards so celebrated in the history of Philip IV. as Count of Olivarez and prime minister of Spain.

The conversation between Guzman and Uzeda, just before the Jesuit entered, was drawing to a close.

"You see," said Uzeda, "that if we desire to crush Calderon, it is on the Inquisition that we must depend. Now is the time to elect, in the successor of Sandoval y Roxas, one pledged to the favourite's ruin. The reason I choose Aliaga is this,— Calderon will never suspect his friendship, and will not, therefore, thwart us with the king. The Jesuit, who would sell all Christendom for the sake of advancement to his order or himself, will gladly sell Calderon to obtain the chair of the Inquisition."

"I believe it," replied Guzman. "I approve your choice; and you may rely on me to destroy Calderon with the prince. I have found out the way to rule Philip; it is by never giving him a right to despise his favourites,— it is to flatter his vanity, but not to share his vices. Trust me, you alone — if you follow my suggestions — can be minister to the Fourth Philip."

Here a page entered to announce Don Fray Louis d'Aliaga.

Uzeda advanced to the door, and received the holy man with profound respect.

"Be seated, father, and let me at once to business; for time presses, and all must be despatched to-night. Before interest is made by others with the king, we must be prompt in gaining the appointment of Sandoval's successor."

"Report says that the cardinal-duke, your father, himself desires the vacant chair of the Inquisition."

"My poor father, he is old,— his sun has set. No, Aliaga; I have thought of one fitter for that high and stern office: in a word, that appointment rests with yourself. I can make you Grand Inquisitor of Spain,— I."

"Me!" said the Jesuit, and he turned aside his face. "You jest with me, noble son."

"I am serious,— hear me. We have been foes and rivals; why should not our path be the same? Calderon has deprived you of friends more powerful than himself. His hour is come. The Duke de Lerma's downfall cannot be avoided; if it could, I, his son, would not, as you may suppose, withhold my hand. But business fatigues him; he is old; the affairs of Spain are in a deplorable condition; they need younger and abler hands. My father will not repine at a retirement suited to his years, and which shall be made honourable to his gray hairs. But some victim must glut the rage of the people; that victim must be the upstart Calderon; the means of his punishment, the Inquisition. Now, you understand me. On one condition you shall be the successor to Sandoval. Know that I do not promise without the power to fulfil. The instant I learned that the late cardinal's death was certain, I repaired to the king. I have the promise of the appointment; and this night your name shall, if you accept the condition, and Calderon does not in the interim see the king and prevent the nomination, receive the royal sanction."

"Our excellent Aliaga cannot hesitate," said Don Gaspar de Guzman. "The order of Loyola rests upon shoulders that can well support the load."

Before that trio separated, the compact was completed. Aliaga practised against his friend the lesson he had preached

to him,— that the end sanctifies all means. Scarce had Aliaga departed ere Juan de la Nuza entered; for Uzeda, who sought to make the Inquisition his chief instrument of power, courted the friendship of all its officers. He readily promised to obtain the release of Fonseca; and, in effect, it was but little after midnight when an order arrived at the prison for the release of Don Martin de Fonseca, accompanied by a note from the duke to the prisoner, full of affectionate professions, and requesting to see him the next morning.

Late as the hour was, and in spite of the expostulations of the governor, who wished him to remain the night within the prison, in the hope to extract from him his secret, Fonseca no sooner received the order than he claimed and obtained his liberation.

CHAPTER X.

WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.

WITH emotions of joy and triumph, such as had never yet agitated his reckless and abandoned youth, the Infant of Spain bent his way towards the lonely house on the road to Fuencarral. He descended from his carriage when about a hundred yards from the abode, and proceeded on foot to the appointed place.

The Jew opened the door to the prince with a hideous grin on his hollow cheek; and Philip hastened up the stairs, and entering the chamber we have before described, beheld, to his inconceivable consternation and dismay, the form of Beatriz clasped in the arms of Calderon, her head leaning on his bosom, while his voice half choked with passionate sobs called upon her in the most endearing terms.

For a moment the prince stood, spell-bound and speechless, at the threshold; then, striking the hilt of his sword fiercely, he exclaimed, "Traitor! is it thus that thou hast kept thy promise? Dost thou not tremble at my vengeance?"

"Peace! peace!" said Calderon, in an imperious but sepulchral tone, and waving one hand with a gesture of impatience and rebuke, while with the other he removed the long clustering hair that fell over the pale face of the still insensible novice. "Peace, prince of Spain; thy voice scares back the struggling life — peace! Look up, image and relic of the lost, the murdered, the martyr! Hush! do you hear her breathe, or is she with her mother in that heaven which is closed on me? Live! live! my daughter, my child, live! For thy life in the World Hereafter will *not* be mine!"

"What means this?" said the prince, falteringly. "What delusion do thy wiles practise upon me?"

Calderon made no answer; and at that instant Beatriz sighed heavily, and her eyes opened.

"My child! my child! — thou art my child! Speak! let me hear thy voice; again let it call me 'father'!"

And Calderon dropped on his knees, and, clasping his hands fervently, looked up imploringly in her face. The novice, now slowly returning to life and consciousness, strove to speak; her voice failed her, but her lips smiled upon Calderon, and her arms fell feebly but endearingly round his neck.

"Bless thee! bless thee!" exclaimed Calderon. "Bless thee in thy sweet mother's name!"

While he spoke the eyes of Beatriz caught the form of Philip, who stood by, leaning on his sword, his face working with various passions, and his lip curling with stern and intense disdain. Accustomed to know human life but in its worst shapes, and Calderon only by his vices and his arts, the voice of nature uttered no language intelligible to the prince. He regarded the whole as some well got-up device, — some trick of the stage; and waited, with impatience and scorn, the *dénouement* of the imposture.

At the sight of that mocking face, Beatriz shuddered, and fell back; but her very alarm revived her, and starting to her feet, she exclaimed, "Save me from that bad man, — save me! My father, I *am* safe with thee!"

"Safe!" echoed Calderon, — "ay, safe against the world.

But not," he added, looking round, and in a low and muttered tone, "not in this foul abode; its very air pollutes thee. Let us hence: come, come, my daughter!" and winding his arm round her waist, he hurried her towards the door.

"Back, traitor!" cried Philip, placing himself full in the path of the distracted and half delirious father. "Back! thinkest thou that I, thy master and thy prince, am to be thus duped and thus insulted? Not for thine own pleasures hast thou snatched her whom I have honoured with my love from the sanctuary of the Church. Go, if thou wilt; but Beatriz remains. This roof is sacred to my will. Back! or thy next step is on the point of my sword."

"Menace not, speak not, Philip,—I am desperate. I am beside myself, I cannot parley with thee. Away! by thy hopes of Heaven, away! I am no longer thy minion, thy tool. I am a father, and the protector of my child."

"Brave device! notable tale!" cried Philip, scornfully, and placing his back against the door. "The little actress plays her part well, it must be owned,—it is her trade; but thou art a bungler, my gentle Calderon."

For a moment the courtier stood, not irresolute, but overcome with the passions that shook to their centre a nature, the stormy and stern elements of which the habit of years had rather mastered than quelled. At last, with a fierce cry, he suddenly grasped the prince by the collar of his vest; and, ere Philip could avail himself of his weapon, swung him aside with such violence that he lost his balance and (his foot slipping on the polished floor) fell to the ground. Calderon then opened the door, lifted Beatriz in both his arms, and fled precipitately down the stairs. He could no longer trust to chance and delay against the dangers of that abode.

CHAPTER XI.

HOWSOEVER THE RIVERS WIND, THE OCEAN RECEIVES THEM ALL.

MEANWHILE Fonseca had reached the convent; had found the porter gone; and, with a mind convulsed with apprehension and doubt, had flown on the wings of love and fear to the house indicated by Calderon. The grim and solitary mansion came just in sight — the moon streaming sadly over its gray and antique walls — when he heard his name pronounced, and the convent porter emerged from the shadow of a wall beside which he had ensconced himself.

“Don Martin! it is thou indeed; blessed be the saints! I began to fear,— nay, I fear now, that we were deceived.”

“Speak, man, but stop me not! Speak! what horrors hast thou to utter?”

“I knew the cavalier whom thou didst send in thy place! Who knows not Roderigo Calderon? I trembled when I saw him lift the novice into the carriage; but I thought I should, as agreed, be companion in the flight. Not so. Don Roderigo briefly told me to hide where I could this night; and that to-morrow he would arrange preparations for my flight from Madrid. My mind misgave me, for Calderon’s name is blackened by many curses. I resolved to follow the carriage. I did so; but my breath and speed nearly failed, when, fortunately, the carriage was stopped and entangled by a crowd in the street. No lackeys were behind; I mounted the foot-board unobserved, and descended and hid myself when the carriage stopped. I knew not the house, but I knew the neighbourhood — a brother of mine lives at hand. I sought my relative for a night’s shelter. I learned that dark stories had given to that house an evil name. It was one of those which the Prince of Spain had consecrated to the pursuits

that have dishonoured so many families in Madrid. I resolved again to go forth and watch. Scarce had I reached this very spot when I saw a carriage approach rapidly. I secreted myself behind a buttress, and saw the carriage halt; and a man descended, and walked to the house. See there — there, by yon crossing, the carriage still waits. The man was wrapped in a mantle. I know not whom he may be; but — ”

“Heavens ! ” cried Fonseca, as they were now close before the door of the house at which Calderon’s carriage still stood; “I hear a noise, a shriek, within.”

Scarce had he spoken when the door opened. Voices were heard in loud altercation; presently the form of the Jew was thrown on the pavement, and dashing aside another man, who seemed striving to detain him, Calderon appeared,—his drawn sword in his right hand, his left arm clasped round Beatriz.

Fonseca darted forward.

“My lover! my betrothed!” exclaimed the voice of the novice; “thou art come to save us,— to save thy Beatriz ! ”

“Yes; and to chastise the betrayer!” exclaimed Fonseca in a voice of thunder. “Leave thy victim, villain! Defend thyself ! ”

He made a desperate lunge at Calderon while he spoke. The marquis feebly parried the stroke.

“Hold ! ” he cried. “Not on me ! ”

“No! no ! ” exclaimed Beatriz, throwing herself on her father’s breast. The words came too late. Blinded and deafened with rage, Fonseca had again, with more sure and deadly aim, directed his weapon against his supposed foe. The blade struck home, but not to the heart of Calderon. It was Beatriz, bathed in her blood, who fell at the feet of her frenzied lover.

“Daughter and mother both ! ” muttered Calderon; and he fell as if the steel had pierced his own heart, beside his child.

“Wretch! what hast thou done?” muttered a voice strange to the ear of Fonseca,— a voice half stifled with horror and, perhaps, remorse. The Prince of Spain stood on the spot,

and his feet were dabbled in the blood of the virgin martyr. The moonlight alone lighted that spectacle of crime and death; and the faces of all seemed ghastly beneath its beams. Beatriz turned her eyes upon her lover, with an expression of celestial compassion, and divine forgiveness; then sinking upon Calderon's breast, she muttered,—

“Pardon him! pardon him, Father! I shall tell my mother that thou hast blessed me!”

It was not for several days after that night of terror that Calderon was heard of at the court. His absence was unaccountable; for, though the flight of the novice was of course known, her fate was not suspected; and her rank had been too insignificant to create much interest in her escape or much vigilance in pursuit. But of that absence the courtier's enemies well availed themselves. The plans of the cabal were ripe; and the aid of the Inquisition, by the appointment of Aliaga, was added to the machinations of Uzeda's partisans. The king was deeply incensed at the mysterious absence of Calderon, for which a thousand ingenious conjectures were invented. The Duke of Lerma, infirm and enfeebled by years, was unable to confront his foes. With imbecile despair he called on the name of Calderon; and when no trace of that powerful ally could be discovered, he forbore even to seek an interview with the king. Suddenly the storm broke. One evening Lerma received the royal order to surrender his posts, and to quit the court by daybreak. It was in this very hour that the door of Lerma's chamber opened, and Roderigo Calderon stood before him. But how changed! how blasted from his former self! His eyes were sunk deep in their sockets, and their fire was quenched; his cheeks were hollow, his frame bent, and when he spoke his voice was as that of one calling from the tomb.

“Behold me, Duke de Lerma, I am returned at last!”

“Returned—blessings on thee! Where hast thou been? Why didst thou desert me?—no matter, thou art returned! Fly to the king,—tell him I am not old! I do not want repose. Defeat the villany of my unnatural son! They would

banish me, Calderon,— banish me in the very prime of my years! My son says I am old — old! — ha! ha! Fly to the prince; he too has immured himself in his apartment. He would not see me; he will see *thee*!"

"Ay, the prince! we have cause to love each other!"

"Ye have indeed! Hasten, Calderon; not a moment is to be lost! Banished! Calderon, *shall* I be banished?" And the old man, bursting into tears, fell at the feet of Calderon, and clasped his knees. "Go, go, I implore thee! Save me; I loved *thee*, Calderon, I always loved thee. Shall our foes triumph? Shall the horn of the wicked be exalted?"

For a moment (so great is the mechanical power of habit) there returned to Calderon something of his wonted energy and spirit; a light broke from his sunken eyes; he drew himself up to the full of his stately height. "I thought I had done with courts and with life," said he; "but I will make one more effort; I will not forsake you in your hour of need. Yes, Uzeda shall be baffled; I will seek the king. Fear not, my lord, fear not; the charm of my power is not yet broken."

So saying, Calderon raised the cardinal from the ground, and extricating himself from the old man's grasp strode, with his customary air of majestic self-reliance, to the door. Just ere he reached it, three low but regular knocks sounded on the panel; the door opened, and the space without was filled with the dark forms of the officers of the Inquisition.

"Stand!" said a deep voice; "stand, Roderigo Calderon, Marquis de Siete Iglesias; in the name of the most Holy Inquisition, we arrest thee!"

"Aliaga!" muttered Calderon, falling back.

"Peace!" interrupted the Jesuit. "Officers, remove your prisoner."

"Poor old man," said Calderon, turning towards the cardinal, who stood spell-bound and speechless, "*thy* life at least is safe. For me, I defy fate! Lead on!"

The Prince of Spain soon recovered from the shock which the death of Beatriz at first occasioned him. New pleasures chased away even remorse. He appeared again in public a

few days after the arrest of Calderon; and he made strong intercession on behalf of his former favourite. But even had the Inquisition desired to relax its grasp, or Uzeda to forego his vengeance, so great was the exultation of the people at the fall of the dreaded and obnoxious secretary, and so numerous the charges which party malignity added to those which truth could lay at his door, that it would have required a far bolder monarch than Philip the Third to have braved the voice of a whole nation for the sake of a disgraced minister. The prince himself was soon induced by new favourites to consider any further interference on his part equally impolitic and vain; and the Duke d'Uzeda and Don Gaspar de Guzman were minions quite as supple, while they were companions infinitely more respectable.

One day, an officer, attending the levee of the prince, with whom he was a special favourite, presented a memorial requesting the interest of his highness for an appointment in the royal armies, that, he had just learned by an express, was vacant.

"And whose death comes so opportunely for thy rise, Don Alvar?" asked the Infant.

"Don Martin Fonseca. He fell in the late skirmish, pierced by a hundred wounds."

The prince started and turned hastily away. The officer lost all favour from that hour, and never learned his offence.

Meanwhile months passed, and Calderon still languished in his dungeon. At last the Inquisition opened against him its dark register of accusations. First of these charges was that of sorcery, practised on the king; the rest were for the most part equally grotesque and extravagant. These accusations Calderon met with a dignity which confounded his foes, and belied the popular belief in the elements of his character. Submitted to the rack, he bore its tortures without a groan; and all historians have accorded concurrent testimony to the patience and heroism which characterized the close of his wild and meteoric career.

At length Philip the Third died; the Infant ascended the throne,—that prince, for whom the ambitious courtier had

perilled alike life and soul! The people now believed that they should be defrauded of their victim. They were mistaken. The new king, by this time, had forgotten even the existence of the favourite of the prince. But Guzman, who, while affecting to minister to the interests of Uzeda, was secretly aiming at the monopoly of the royal favour, felt himself insecure while Calderon yet lived. The operations of the Inquisition were too slow for the impatience of his fears; and as that dread tribunal affected never to inflict death until the accused had confessed his guilt, the firmness of Calderon baffled the vengeance of the ecclesiastical law. New inquiries were set on foot; a corpse was discovered, buried in Calderon's garden,—the corpse of a female. He was accused of the murder. Upon that charge he was transferred from the Inquisition to the regular courts of justice. No evidence could be produced against him; but, to the astonishment of all, he made no defence, and his silence was held the witness of his crime. He was adjudged to the scaffold — he smiled when he heard the sentence.

An immense crowd, one bright day in summer, were assembled in the place of execution. A shout of savage exultation rent the air as Roderigo Calderon, Marquis de Siete Iglesias, appeared upon the scaffold. But, when the eyes of the multitude rested — not upon that lofty and stately form, in all the pride of manhood, which they had been accustomed to associate with their fears of the stern genius and iron power of the favourite — but upon a bent and spectral figure, that seemed already on the verge of a natural grave, with a face ploughed deep with traces of unutterable woe, and hollow eyes that looked with dim and scarce conscious light over the human sea that murmured and swayed below, the tide of the popular emotion changed; to rage and triumph succeeded shame and pity. Not a hand was lifted up in accusation,— not a voice was raised in rebuke or joy. Beside Calderon stood the appointed priest, whispering cheer and consolation.

“Fear not, my son,” said the holy man. “The pang of the body strikes years of purgatory from thy doom. Think of this, and bless even the agony of this hour.”



"Yes," muttered Calderon; "I do bless this hour. Inez, thy daughter has avenged thy murder! May Heaven accept the sacrifice! and may my eyes, even athwart the fiery gulf, awaken upon thee!"

With that a serene and contented smile passed over the face on which the crowd gazed with breathless awe. A minute more, and a groan, a cry, broke from that countless multitude; and a gory and ghastly head, severed from its trunk, was raised on high.

Two spectators of that execution were in one of the balconies that commanded a full view of its terrors.

"So perishes my worst foe!" said Uzeda.

"We must sacrifice all things, friends as foes, in the ruthless march of the Great Cause," rejoined the Grand Inquisitor; but he sighed as he spoke.

"Guzman is now with the king," said Uzeda, turning into the chamber. "I expect every instant a summons into the royal presence."

"I cannot share thy sanguine hopes, my son," said Aliaga, shaking his head. "My profession has made me a deep reader of human character. Gaspar de Guzman will remove every rival from his path."

While he spoke, there entered a gentleman of the royal chamber. He presented to the Grand Inquisitor and the expectant duke two letters signed by the royal hand. They were the mandates of banishment and disgrace. Not even the ghostly rank of the Grand Inquisitor, not even the profound manœuvres of the son of Lerma, availed them against the vigilance and vigour of the new favourite. Simultaneously, a shout from the changeable crowd below proclaimed that the king's choice of his new minister was published and approved.

And Aliaga and Uzeda exchanged glances that bespoke all the passions that make defeated ambition the worst fiend, as they heard the mighty cry, "**LONG LIVE OLIVAREZ THE REFORMER!**"

That cry came, faint and muffled, to the ears of Philip the Fourth, as he sat in his palace with his new minister.

"Whence that shout?" said the king, hastily.

"It rises, doubtless, from the honest hearts of your loyal people at the execution of Calderon."

Philip shaded his face with his hand, and mused a moment; then, turning to Olivarez with a sarcastic smile, he said: "Behold the moral of the life of a courtier, Count! What do they say of the new opera?"

At the close of his life, in disgrace and banishment, the count-duke, for the first time since they had been uttered, called to his recollection those words of his royal master.¹

¹ The fate of Calderon has given rise to many tales and legends. Amongst those who have best availed themselves of so fruitful a subject may be ranked the late versatile and ingenious Telesforo de Trueba, in his work on "The Romances of Spain." In a few of the incidents, and in some of the names, his sketch, called "The Fortunes of Calderon," has a resemblance to the story just concluded. The plot, characters, and principal events are, however, widely distinct in our several adaptations of an ambiguous and unsatisfactory portion of Spanish history.

THE END.

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